

By: Lucio

S.B. No. 1051

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to student loan repayment assistance for school counselors employed by a school district.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter M-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER M-1. REPAYMENT OF CERTAIN SCHOOL COUNSELOR EDUCATION

LOANS

Sec. 61.721. LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED. Subject to Section 61.728, the board shall provide, in accordance with this subchapter and board rules, assistance in the repayment of eligible student loans for eligible school counselors who apply and qualify for the assistance.

Sec. 61.722. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible to receive loan repayment assistance under this subchapter, a school counselor must:

(1) apply annually for the repayment assistance in a manner prescribed by the board;

(2) be a United States citizen or permanent resident alien;

(3) have earned at least a master's degree related to counseling from any public or accredited private institution of higher education;

(4) be certified as a school counselor under

1 Subchapter B, Chapter 21; and

2 (5) have completed one, two, three, four, or five  
3 years of consecutive employment by a school district in this state:

4 (A) all or part of which is located in a federally  
5 designated mental health care health professional shortage area; or

6 (B) at a school that receives federal funding  
7 under Title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20  
8 U.S.C. Section 6301 et seq.).

9 Sec. 61.723. LIMITATIONS. A school counselor may receive  
10 loan repayment assistance under this subchapter for not more than  
11 five years.

12 Sec. 61.724. ELIGIBLE LOANS. (a) The board may provide  
13 loan repayment assistance under this subchapter for the repayment  
14 of any student loan for education at an institution of higher  
15 education, a private or independent institution of higher  
16 education, or a public or private out-of-state institution of  
17 higher education accredited by a recognized accrediting agency,  
18 including loans for undergraduate education, received by an  
19 eligible person through any lender.

20 (b) The board may not provide repayment assistance for a  
21 student loan that is in default at the time of the person's  
22 application.

23 (c) In each state fiscal biennium, the board shall attempt  
24 to allocate all funds appropriated to the board for the purpose of  
25 providing loan repayment assistance under this subchapter.

26 Sec. 61.725. REPAYMENT. (a) The board shall deliver any  
27 repayment under this subchapter in a lump sum payable:

1           (1) to both the lender or other holder of the loan and  
2 the school counselor; or

3           (2) directly to the lender or other holder of the loan  
4 on the school counselor's behalf.

5           (b) A repayment under this subchapter may be applied to any  
6 amount due in connection with the loan.

7           Sec. 61.726. AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE. (a) A school  
8 counselor may receive loan repayment assistance under this  
9 subchapter for each year the school counselor establishes  
10 eligibility for the assistance in an amount determined by applying  
11 the following applicable percentage to the maximum total amount of  
12 assistance allowed for the school counselor under Subsection (b):

13                   (1) for the first year, 10 percent;

14                   (2) for the second year, 15 percent;

15                   (3) for the third year, 20 percent;

16                   (4) for the fourth year, 25 percent; and

17                   (5) for the fifth year, 30 percent.

18           (b) The total amount of repayment assistance received by a  
19 school counselor under this subchapter may not exceed:

20                   (1) \$80,000, for assistance received by a school  
21 counselor who holds a doctoral degree related to counseling; and

22                   (2) \$40,000, for assistance received by a school  
23 counselor who holds a master's degree related to counseling.

24           (c) The total amount of loan repayment assistance provided  
25 under this subchapter may not exceed the sum of:

26                   (1) the total amount of gifts and grants accepted by  
27 the board for the repayment assistance;

1           (2) legislative appropriations for the repayment  
2 assistance; and

3           (3) other funds available to the board for the  
4 repayment assistance.

5           (d) The board may adjust in an equitable manner the  
6 distribution amounts that school counselors would otherwise  
7 receive under Subsection (a) for a year as necessary to comply with  
8 Subsection (c).

9           Sec. 61.727. RULES; ADMINISTRATION. (a) The board shall  
10 adopt rules necessary to administer this subchapter.

11           (b) The board shall distribute to each institution of higher  
12 education or private or independent institution of higher education  
13 and to any appropriate state agency and professional association  
14 copies of the rules adopted under this section and other pertinent  
15 information relating to this subchapter.

16           (c) The board shall administer the program under this  
17 subchapter in a manner that maximizes any matching funds available  
18 through other sources.

19           Sec. 61.728. APPROPRIATION CONTINGENCY; GIFTS AND GRANTS.

20           (a) The board is required to implement this subchapter only if the  
21 legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If  
22 the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that  
23 purpose, the board may, but is not required to, implement this  
24 subchapter using other money available to the board for that  
25 purpose.

26           (b) The board may solicit and accept gifts and grants from  
27 any public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

1 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.