**BILL ANALYSIS**

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| Senate Research Center | S.B. 804 |
| 88R6931 MM-D | By: Schwertner |
|  | Subcommittee on Higher Education |
|  | 4/4/2023 |
|  | As Filed |

**AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Established by the 84th Legislature, the Loan Repayment for Mental Health Professionals Program (program) was created to alleviate workforce shortages by offering a financial incentive for mental health professionals to work in underserved areas. Currently, the program encourages qualified mental health professionals to practice in a mental health professional shortage area (MHPSA) or in secure correctional facilities operated by or under contract with the criminal justice agencies located in a MHPSA, and provide services to Medicaid and/or Children's Health Insurance Program recipients.

The program was designed to be both a recruitment and retention tool and has already served 270 professionals since its creation in 2015. However, the shortage of psychiatrists alone is projected to grow from 1,067 professionals in 2017 to 1,208 professionals by 2030, showing that program expansion is necessary to address the critical shortage and growing demand for mental health services across the state.

S.B. 804 would amend eligibility requirements to accept professionals working in a state hospital or local mental health authority, regardless of location. Expanding the eligible service locations will incentivize more Texans to enter the behavioral health workforce and further the program's initiative to relieve the financial barriers related to entering the industry.

As proposed, S.B. 804 amends current law relating to eligibility requirements for student loan repayment assistance for certain mental health professionals.

**RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

**SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.603, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.603. ELIGIBILITY. (a) Requires a mental health professional, except as provided by Subsection (b), to be eligible to receive repayment assistance under Subchapter K (Repayment of Certain Mental Health Professional Education Loans), to take certain actions.

(b) Authorizes a mental health professional to also establish eligibility for the repayment assistance under this subchapter by satisfying the requirements of this subsection. Requires the mental health professional, to establish eligibility under this subsection, to:

(1) apply to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board;

(2) provide mental health services to:

(A) patients in a state hospital, as defined by Section 552.0011 (Definition), Health and Safety Code; or

(B) individuals receiving community-based mental health services from a local mental health authority that provides the services in accordance with Subchapter B (Community-Based Mental Health Services), Chapter 534, Health and Safety Code; and

(3) have completed one, two, three, four, or five consecutive years of practice in this state as described by Subdivision (2).

(c) Requires a licensed physician, in addition to satisfying the requirements under Subsection (a) or (b), for the physician to be eligible to receive repayment assistance under this subchapter after the physician's third consecutive year of practice described under Subsection (a)(2) (relating to requiring a mental health professional, to be eligible to receive repayment assistance, to have completed a certain number of years of practice in a mental health professional shortage area) or (b)(3), as applicable, to be certified in psychiatry by certain entities.

SECTION 2. Makes application of Section 61.603, Education Code, as amended by this Act, prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2023.