

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
88R12455 JRJ-F

H.B. 2026
By: Darby et al. (LaMantia)
Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The 87th Texas Legislature overwhelmingly enacted H.B. 1259, which modernized the rural veterinarian incentive program (program). According to a bill analysis for H.B. 1259, the program was designed to carefully select and incentivize veterinarians to serve in high-need areas by providing educational loan assistance in exchange for a commitment to practice in areas of shortage.

When implementing this legislation, a few issues were identified that require legislative attention, including the fact that program participants must enter into an agreement with a university system, rather than the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which is the entity actually charged with overseeing the program account, and the second being that the program currently excludes individuals enrolled as students at an out-of-state college of veterinary medicine at the time of application.

H.B. 2026 seeks to address these issues and increase the effectiveness of the program in addressing the shortage of veterinarians in rural Texas by changing the entity with which program participants must enter into an agreement to THECB, extending program eligibility to certain out-of-state students, and expanding the number of counties considered to be rural counties for purposes of the program.

H.B. 2026 amends current law relating to the Rural Veterinarian Incentive Program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the rural veterinarian incentive program committee is modified in SECTION 2 (Section 56.103, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Sections 56.101(2) and (7), Education Code, to redefine "college" and "rural county."

SECTION 2. Amends Section 56.103(d), Education Code, to require the rural veterinarian incentive program committee (committee) to adopt rules establishing preferential treatment in the selection process for applicants who are residents of this state, who graduated from a high school located in this state or general academic teaching institution located in this state, or who graduated from an accredited college of veterinary medicine in this state. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 56.104, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 56.104. ELIGIBLE VETERINARY STUDENT OR GRADUATE. Deletes existing text creating an exception under Subsection (b). Deletes existing text of Subsection (b) authorizing a person enrolled as a student in an accredited college of veterinary medicine located outside of this state to apply under Subsection (a) to participate in the program if the student graduated from a high school located in this state or a general academic teaching institution located in this state. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 56.105(b), Education Code, to make a nonsubstantive change.

SECTION 5. Amends Sections 56.106(a) and (b), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires an eligible participant, to participate in the program, to enter into an agreement with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), rather than an agreement with the university system, that meets certain guidelines.

(b) Requires that the financial support received by an eligible participant under Subchapter G (Rural Veterinarian Incentive Program) be used to retire student loan debt or to pay tuition and fees to a college, rather than the university system, while the eligible participant is enrolled in the college.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.