

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 3140
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised regarding the current shortage of school mental health professionals in public schools. H.B. 3140 seeks to incentivize any persons who are interested in providing mental health services to public school students by providing loan repayment assistance for service as a mental health professional in public schools under the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Assistance Program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 3140 amends the Education Code to expand the established purposes of the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Assistance Program to include attracting to the school mental health profession any persons who have expressed interest in providing mental health services to students enrolled in public schools and to support the employment of those persons as school mental health professionals by providing student loan repayment assistance for service as a mental health provider in Texas public schools.

H.B. 3140 makes Teach for Texas repayment assistance available to a mental health professional who applies for the assistance and meets the following criteria:

- for at least one year has been employed full-time at, and provided mental health services to students enrolled in, a public school in Texas; and
- is currently employed full-time at, and providing mental health services to students enrolled in, a public school in Texas.

The bill excludes a shortage of such mental health professionals from the shortages for which the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) must establish priorities if the money available for loan repayment assistance in a period is insufficient to provide assistance to all eligible applicants. These provisions apply only to a person who first establishes eligibility for loan repayment assistance under the program on the basis of an application submitted on or after September 1, 2023.

H.B. 3140 authorizes the THECB to provide for the payment of a portion of the repayment assistance in installments before the person completes a full year of service as a school mental health professional and for the payment of the remainder after the completion of the full year of service. The bill requires the THECB to distribute a copy of its adopted rules and other pertinent

information relating to the loan repayment assistance program to each public or private institution of higher education in Texas that offers an educational program that prepares students for a school mental health profession.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.