

BILL ANALYSIS

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H.B. 4363
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The State of Texas is currently experiencing a dramatic decline in teacher retention and retainment, with diminishing numbers of students entering into the teaching profession. A recent report from the Learning Policy Institute found that Texas has outpaced national teacher attrition averages by approximately 25 percent over the past decade; in 2021 alone, more than one in nine teachers left the workforce. School debt, financial instability, and insufficient preparation programs are stressors that lead educators to leave the profession. Research conducted by the University of Houston found that educators who received their preparation from a four-year university were 11 percent more likely to remain in the teaching profession than those prepared at a for-profit preparation program and 15 percent more likely to remain than those prepared in a nonprofit preparation program. A scholarship program that focuses on high quality educator preparation and university-based programming may help better prepare our educators for the classroom and relieve the financial hardships of acquiring a college degree.

H.B. 4363 seeks to establish a scholarship program to recruit, prepare, and retain a talented and diverse workforce of career teachers to be leaders in their field and to provide assistance for costs of attendance at eligible institutions.

H.B. 4363 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program for certain students at public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Sections 56.505 and 56.508, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Subchapter S, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER S. FUTURE TEXAS TEACHERS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Sec. 56.501. DEFINITIONS. Defines "coordinating board," "eligible institution," "enrolled full-time," and "scholarship program."

Sec. 56.502. PURPOSE. Provides that the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program (program) is created to recruit, prepare, and retain a talented and diverse workforce of career teachers to be leaders in their field and to provide assistance for tuition, mandatory fees, and other usual and customary costs of attendance at an eligible institution as provided by Sections 56.506 and 56.507.

Sec. 56.503. ELIGIBLE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS. Requires an educator preparation program, to be eligible to participate in the scholarship program, to:

- (1) be operated by an eligible institution;
- (2) provide a structured system of support to assist scholarship recipients to successfully complete the educator preparation program;

- (3) require additional hours of field-based experience for students above the minimum hours required by State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rule;
- (4) require additional hours of clinical teaching experience for students above the minimum hours required by SBEC rule;
- (5) provide or facilitate opportunities for scholarship recipients to participate in learning opportunities beyond the university classroom setting; and
- (6) comply with other eligibility criteria established by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rule.

Sec. 56.504. INITIAL STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. (a) Requires a person, to be eligible initially for a scholarship under the scholarship program, to:

- (1) be a Texas resident under Section 54.052 (Determination of Resident Status);

- (2) either:

- (A) be enrolled full-time in an eligible institution; or

- (B) have applied for admission to an eligible institution and enroll full-time in that institution in the academic year immediately following the person's application;

- (3) once enrolled full-time in an eligible institution, be working toward a baccalaureate or master's degree and on track to be admitted to an eligible educator preparation program, as verified by the eligible institution operating the educator preparation program;

- (4) demonstrate a commitment to pursuing a career as a classroom teacher in a public school in this state:

- (A) in a teaching field identified by the commissioner of education (commissioner) as experiencing a critical shortage of teachers in this state; or

- (B) in a public school in this state in which a majority of students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged;

- (5) comply with Section 28.0256 (Financial Aid Application Requirement for High School Graduation); and

- (6) comply with any other academic or nonacademic requirements adopted by THECB under this subchapter.

(b) Provides that a person is not eligible to receive a scholarship under the scholarship program if the person has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense relating to the duties and responsibilities of the education profession, including:

- (1) an offense involving moral turpitude;

- (2) an offense involving a form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or student or other illegal conduct in which the victim is a minor or student;

- (3) a felony offense involving the possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of or conspiracy to possess, transfer, sell, or distribute a controlled

substance, as defined by Chapter 481 (Texas Controlled Substances Act), Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.;

(4) an offense involving the illegal transfer, appropriation, or use of school district funds or other district property; or

(5) an offense involving an attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter a professional certificate or license issued under Subchapter B (Certification of Educators), Chapter 21.

Sec. 56.505. CONTINUING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS. (a) Authorizes a person, after initially qualifying for a scholarship under this subchapter, to continue to receive a scholarship under the scholarship program during each semester or term in which the person is enrolled at an eligible institution only if the person:

(1) demonstrates a continued commitment to pursuing a career as a classroom teacher:

(A) in a teaching field identified by the commissioner as experiencing a critical shortage of teachers in this state; or

(B) in a public school in this state in which a majority of students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged;

(2) remains enrolled full-time in an eligible institution;

(3) remains enrolled in or is on track to be admitted to an eligible educator preparation program, as verified by the eligible institution in which the person is enrolled;

(4) makes satisfactory academic progress toward completion of a baccalaureate or master's degree and approval to take a teacher certification exam, as verified by the eligible institution; and

(5) complies with any other academic or nonacademic requirements adopted by THECB under this subchapter.

(b) Provides that a person is not eligible to continue to receive a scholarship under the scholarship program if the person has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense described by Section 56.504(b).

(c) Prohibits a person, if the person fails to meet any of the requirements of Subsection (a) after the completion of any semester or term, from receiving a scholarship under this subchapter during the next semester or term in which the person enrolls. Authorizes a person to become eligible to receive a scholarship under this subchapter in a subsequent semester or term if the person:

(1) completes a semester or term during which the person is not eligible for a scholarship; and

(2) meets all the requirements of Subsection (a).

(d) Provides that a person, for the purpose of this section, makes satisfactory academic progress toward a baccalaureate or master's degree only if:

(1) in the person's first academic year the person meets the satisfactory academic progress requirements of the eligible institution in which the person is enrolled; and

(2) in a subsequent academic year, the person:

(A) completes at least 75 percent of the semester credit hours attempted in the person's most recent academic year; and

(B) has earned an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on coursework previously attempted at an eligible institution.

(e) Provides that a person who is eligible to receive a scholarship under this subchapter continues to remain eligible to receive the scholarship if the person enrolls in or transfers to an eligible educator preparation program at another eligible institution.

(f) Requires THECB to adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a scholarship under this subchapter, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown, including a showing of a severe illness or other debilitating condition that may affect the person's academic performance or that the person is responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy person and that the person's provision of care may affect the person's academic performance, to receive a scholarship under this subchapter:

(1) while enrolled in a number of semester credit hours that is less than the number required to be enrolled full-time; or

(2) if the person's grade point average or completion rate falls below the satisfactory academic progress requirements of Subsection (d).

(g) Provides that a person's eligibility for a scholarship under this subchapter ends on the earlier of:

(1) the fourth anniversary of the initial award of a scholarship under this subchapter to the person and the person's enrollment in an eligible institution; or

(2) the person's completion of the baccalaureate or master's degree program described by Section 56.504(a)(3).

Sec. 56.506. SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT. (a) Provides that the amount of a scholarship under this subchapter, beginning with the 2024–2025 academic year, is equal to the amount of the scholarship for the preceding academic year, adjusted for inflation using the college tuition and fees index component of the consumer price index produced by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(a-1) Provides that the amount of a scholarship under this subchapter, for the 2023–2024 academic year, is \$12,000. Provides that this subsection expires September 1, 2024.

(b) Prohibits the amount of a scholarship under this subchapter from being reduced by any other scholarship, grant, or financial aid which the scholarship recipient receives.

(c) Requires THECB, not later than January 31 of each year, to publish the amounts of each scholarship established by THECB for the academic year beginning the next fall semester.

Sec. 56.507. SCHOLARSHIP USE. Authorizes a person receiving a scholarship under this subchapter to use the money to pay any usual and customary cost of attendance at an eligible institution incurred by the person. Authorizes the institution to disburse all or part

of the proceeds of a scholarship under this subchapter to an eligible person only if the tuition and required fees incurred by the person at the institution have been paid.

Sec. 56.508. ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM. (a) Requires THECB to adopt any rules necessary to:

(1) establish eligibility criteria for educator preparation programs in accordance with Section 56.503 and for scholarship recipients in accordance with Sections 56.504 and 56.505;

(2) establish procedures for the application process and for selecting scholarship recipients from among eligible applicants; and

(3) administer the scholarship program.

(b) Requires THECB, in establishing criteria for eligible educator preparation programs under Section 56.503, to consult with SBEC. Requires THECB to consider the standards used by SBEC in identifying effective, high-quality educator preparation programs grounded in evidence-based best practices and, to the maximum extent possible, align the eligibility criteria to those standards.

(c) Requires THECB, in establishing criteria for eligible persons under Sections 56.504 and 56.505, to consult with representatives of the educator preparation programs from eligible institutions.

(d) Requires THECB, in developing rules related to distributing a scholarship, to consult with financial aid coordinators of eligible institutions.

(e) Prohibits the total amount of scholarships awarded from exceeding the amount available for the program from appropriations, gifts, grants, or other funds.

(f) Requires THECB, from money appropriated by the legislature for the purposes of this subchapter, to determine annually the allocation of money available for scholarships among eligible institutions and to distribute the money accordingly.

(g) Requires THECB, in determining who should receive a scholarship under this subchapter, to give priority to awarding scholarships to:

(1) persons who demonstrate the greatest financial need and whose expected family contribution, as determined according to the methodology used for federal student financial aid, does not exceed 60 percent of the average statewide amount of tuition and required fees;

(2) first-generation college students, as defined by THECB rule; and

(3) persons who demonstrate a commitment both to entering a teaching field identified by the commissioner as experiencing a critical shortage of teachers and to teaching in a public school in this state in which a majority of students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 56.308(b), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires each school district to notify its middle school students, junior high school students, and high school students, those students' teachers and school counselors, and those students' parents of certain grants and programs, including the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship program, the eligibility requirements of each program, the need for students to make informed curriculum choices to be prepared for success beyond high school, and sources of information on higher education admissions and financial aid in a manner that assists the district in implementing a strategy adopted by the district under Section 11.252(a)(4) (relating to requiring that the school district improvement plan

include provisions for strategies for providing to elementary school, middle school, junior high school, and high school students, those students' teachers and school counselors, and those students' parents information regarding academic success beyond high school education).

SECTION 3. (a) Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer Subchapter S, Chapter 56, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b) Requires THECB to begin awarding scholarships under Subchapter S, Chapter 56, Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2023–2024 academic year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.