By:  Guerra, Muñoz, Jr., Gamez, Longoria, H.B. No. 2171

     Canales, et al.

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Center for Rural Health Education at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

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

SECTION 1.  Chapter 79, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 79.11 to read as follows:

Sec. 79.11.  TEXAS CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION. (a) In this section, "center" means the Texas Center for Rural Health Education.

(b)  The Texas Center for Rural Health Education is established at the university.

(c)  The organization, control, and management of the center are vested in the board.

(d)  Subject to the availability of money appropriated, gifted, or granted for the purposes of the center, the center shall:

(1)  perform an initial assessment of rural health education in this state;

(2)  develop appropriate performance metrics to measure improvement in rural health education and health care outcomes;

(3)  conduct research regarding rural health education, including research to identify:

(A)  best practices in rural health education; and

(B)  underserved rural areas;

(4)  develop recommendations regarding the allocation of funding for tuition and loan repayment programs available to rural health care professionals;

(5)  develop partnerships between high schools, postsecondary institutions of higher education, and local medical systems to recruit, train, and retain health care professionals to serve in underserved rural areas;

(6)  develop a plan to improve rural health education and health care outcomes; and

(7)  develop and maintain an Internet website that provides information regarding rural health education research and resources.

(e)  Subject to the availability of money appropriated, gifted, or granted for the purposes of the center, not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, the center shall submit to the legislature a report on rural health education and health care outcomes in this state. The report must include a summary of the center's activities under Subsection (d) and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

(f)  The university shall encourage public or private entities to participate in or support the operation of the center and may enter into an agreement with any public or private entity for that purpose. An agreement may allow the center to provide information, services, or other assistance to an entity in exchange for the entity's participation or support.

(g)  The board may solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the purposes of the center.

(h)  The board may employ personnel for the center as necessary.

(i)  The board may adopt rules as necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2.  Not later than December 1, 2024, the Texas Center for Rural Health Education shall submit to the legislature the first biennial report required under Section 79.11, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.