By:  West, Blanco, Zaffirini S.B. No. 902

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Leadership Scholars Program.

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

SECTION 1.  Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter T-3 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER T-3. TEXAS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Sec. 61.891.  DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program" means the Texas Leadership Scholars Program established under this subchapter.

Sec. 61.892.  ESTABLISHMENT; ADMINISTRATION. (a) The Texas Leadership Scholars Program is established to serve as a merit-based scholarship and leadership opportunity program for high-achieving, emerging leaders with financial need.

(b)  The board shall administer the program.

(c)  Using money appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose, the board shall award scholarships and provide academic achievement support and leadership development to eligible students under the program.

Sec. 61.893.  INITIAL ELIGIBILITY. To be initially eligible to participate in the program, a student must:

(1)  have graduated from a public high school in this state;

(2)  either:

(A)  have qualified for automatic admission to a general academic teaching institution under Section 51.803; or

(B)  be nominated by the student's high school for participation in the program and hold another academic distinction recognized by the board;

(3)  be enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a general academic teaching institution;

(4)  be economically disadvantaged, as determined by board rule; and

(5)  comply with any additional requirement adopted by the board.

Sec. 61.894.  CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY. After establishing initial eligibility to participate in the program under Section 61.893, a student may continue participating in the program only if the student:

(1)  is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a general academic teaching institution;

(2)  maintains a minimum overall grade point average determined by board rule; and

(3)  complies with any additional requirement adopted by the board.

Sec. 61.895.  ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. The board may enter into agreements with general academic teaching institutions or other institutions of higher education to provide students participating in the program with:

(1)  research-based support to make satisfactory academic progress and graduate on time; and

(2)  leadership development opportunities, including:

(A)  program cohort learning communities;

(B)  mentoring, research, and internship opportunities;

(C)  networking with state government, business, and civic leaders; and

(D)  statewide cohort learning institutes or seminars.

Sec. 61.896.  GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. The board may solicit, accept, and spend grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source for the purposes of the program.

Sec. 61.897.  RULES. The board shall adopt rules for the administration of the program, including rules providing for the amount and permissible uses of a scholarship awarded under the program.

SECTION 2.  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules to administer Subchapter T-3, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2023.