

By: Kuempel

H.B. No. 4363

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a scholarship program for aspiring classroom teachers.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 56, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter S, to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER S: FUTURE TEXAS TEACHERS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Sec. 56.5001. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) "Eligible institution" means a general academic teaching institution, as defined by Section 61.003, or a private or independent institution of higher education, as defined by Section 61.003, that operates an eligible educator preparation program.

(3) "Enrolled full-time" means enrolled for at least twelve semester credit hours or participating in a clinical teaching assignment or internship that meets criteria established by State Board for Educator Certification rule for initial certification as a classroom teacher.

(4) "Scholarship program" means the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program.

Sec. 56.5002. PURPOSE. The Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program is created to recruit, prepare, and retain a talented and diverse workforce of career teachers to be leaders in

1 their field and to provide assistance for tuition, mandatory fees,
2 and other usual and customary costs of attendance as provided by
3 Sections 56.5006 and 56.5007.

4 Sec. 56.5003. ELIGIBLE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS. To
5 be eligible to participate in the scholarship program, an educator
6 preparation program must:

7 (1) be operated by a general academic teaching
8 institution or a private or independent institution of higher
9 education;

10 (2) provide a structured system of support to assist
11 teaching scholarship recipients to successfully complete the
12 educator preparation program;

13 (3) require additional hours of field-based
14 experience to students throughout their enrollment in the educator
15 preparation program, above the minimum hours required by State
16 Board for Educator Certification rule;

17 (4) require additional hours of clinical teaching
18 experience to students, above the minimum hours required by State
19 Board for Educator Certification rule;

20 (5) provide or facilitate opportunities for
21 scholarship recipients to participate in learning opportunities
22 outside of the university classroom setting; and

23 (6) comply with other eligibility criteria
24 established by coordinating board rule.

25 Sec. 56.5004. INITIAL STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP.

26 (a) To be eligible initially for a scholarship under the
27 scholarship program, a person must:

1 (1) be a Texas resident under Section 54.052;

2 (2) either:

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

5 (B) have applied for admission to an eligible
6 institution and enroll full-time in that institution in the
7 succeeding academic year;

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

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

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

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

20 (5) comply with Section 28.0256; and

21 (6) comply with any other academic or nonacademic
22 requirements adopted by the coordinating board.

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

27 (1) an offense involving moral turpitude;

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

4 (3) a felony offense involving the possession,
5 transfer, sale, or distribution of or conspiracy to possess,
6 transfer, sell, or distribute a controlled substance, as defined by
7 Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et
8 seq.;

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

12 (5) an offense involving an attempt by fraudulent or
13 unauthorized means to obtain or alter a professional certificate or
14 license issued under subchapter B, Chapter 21.

15 Sec. 56.5005. CONTINUING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND ACADEMIC
16 PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS. (a) After initially qualifying for a
17 scholarship under this subchapter, a person may continue to receive
18 a scholarship under this subchapter during each semester or term in
19 which the person is enrolled at an eligible institution only if the
20 person:

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 (5) complies with any other academic or nonacademic
11 requirements adopted by the coordinating board under this
12 subchapter.

13 (b) A person is not eligible to continue to receive a
14 scholarship under the scholarship program if the person has been
15 convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense described by Section
16 56.5004(b).

17 (c) If a person fails to meet any of the requirements of
18 Subsection (a) after the completion of any semester or term, the
19 person may not receive a scholarship under this subchapter during
20 the next semester or term in which the person enrolls. A person may
21 become eligible to receive a scholarship under this subchapter in a
22 subsequent semester or term if the person:

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

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

26 (d) For the purpose of this section, a person makes
27 satisfactory academic progress toward a baccalaureate or master's

1 degree only if:

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

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

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

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

12 (e) A person who is eligible to receive a scholarship under
13 this subchapter continues to remain eligible to receive the
14 scholarship if the person enrolls in or transfers to an eligible
15 educational preparation program at another eligible institution.

16 (f) The coordinating board shall adopt rules to allow a
17 person who is otherwise eligible to receive a scholarship under
18 this subchapter, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause
19 shown, including a showing of a severe illness or other
20 debilitating condition that may affect the person's academic
21 performance or that the person is responsible for the care of a
22 sick, injured, or needy person and that the person's provision of
23 care may affect the person's academic performance, to receive a
24 scholarship under this subchapter:

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

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

4 (f) A person's eligibility for a scholarship under this
5 subchapter ends on the earlier of:

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

9 (2) the person's completion of the baccalaureate or
10 master's degree program described by Section 56.5004(a)(3).

11 Sec. 56.5006. SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT. (a) Beginning with the
12 2024-2025 school year, the amount of a scholarship under this
13 subchapter is equal to the amount of the scholarship for the prior
14 school year, adjusted for inflation using the college tuition and
15 fees index component of the consumer price index produced by the
16 United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

17 (a-1) For the 2023-2024 school year, the amount of a
18 scholarship under this subchapter is equal to \$12,000 per school
19 year. This subsection expires September 1, 2024.

20 (b) The amount of a scholarship under this subchapter may
21 not be reduced by any other scholarship, grant, or financial aid
22 which the person receiving the scholarship receives.

23 (c) Not later than January 31 of each year, the coordinating
24 board shall publish the amounts of each scholarship established by
25 the board for the academic year beginning the next fall semester.

26 Sec. 56.5007. SCHOLARSHIP USE. A person receiving a
27 scholarship under this subchapter may use the money to pay any usual

1 and customary cost of attendance at an eligible institution
2 incurred by the student. The institution may disburse all or part
3 of the proceeds of a scholarship under this subchapter to an
4 eligible student only if the tuition and required fees incurred by
5 the person at the institution have been paid.

6 Sec. 56.5008. ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM. (a) The
7 coordinating board shall adopt any rules necessary to establish
8 eligibility criteria for educator preparation programs in
9 accordance with Section 56.5003 and for scholarship recipients in
10 accordance with Sections 56.5004 and 56.5005, to establish
11 procedures for the application process and for selecting
12 scholarship recipients from among eligible applicants, and to
13 administer the scholarship program.

14 (b) In establishing criteria for eligible educator
15 preparation programs under Section 56.5003, the coordinating board
16 shall consult with the State Board for Educator Certification. The
17 coordinating board shall consider the standards used by the State
18 Board of Educator Certification in identifying effective,
19 high-quality educator preparation program grounded in
20 evidence-based best practices and, to the maximum extent possible,
21 align the eligibility criteria to those standards.

22 (c) In establishing criteria for eligible students under
23 Sections 56.5004 and 56.5005, the coordinating board shall consult
24 with representatives of the educator preparation programs from
25 eligible institutions.

26 (d) In developing rules related to distributing a
27 scholarship, the coordinating board shall consult with financial

1 aid coordinators of eligible institutions.

2 (e) The total amount of scholarships awarded may not exceed
3 the amount available for the program from appropriations, gifts,
4 grants, or other funds.

5 (f) From money appropriated by the legislature for the
6 purposes of this subchapter, the coordinating board annually shall
7 determine the allocation of money available for scholarships among
8 eligible institutions and shall distribute the money accordingly.

9 (g) In determining who should receive a teaching
10 scholarship, the coordinating board shall give priority to awarding
11 teaching scholarships to:

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

17 (2) first-generation college students, as defined by
18 coordinating board rule; and

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

24 SECTION 2. Subsection (b), Section 56.308, Education Code,
25 to read as follows:

26 (b) Each school district shall:

27 (1) notify its middle school students, junior high

1 school students, and high school students, those students' teachers
2 and school counselors, and those students' parents of the TEXAS
3 grant, ~~and~~ Teach for Texas grant, and Future Texas Teachers
4 Scholarship programs, the eligibility requirements of each
5 program, the need for students to make informed curriculum choices
6 to be prepared for success beyond high school, and sources of
7 information on higher education admissions and financial aid in a
8 manner that assists the district in implementing a strategy adopted
9 by the district under Section 11.252(a)(4); and

10 (2) ensure that each student's official transcript or
11 diploma indicates whether the student has completed or is on
12 schedule to complete:

13 (A) the recommended or advanced high school
14 curriculum required for grant eligibility under Section 28.002 or
15 28.025; or

16 (B) for a school district covered by Section
17 56.304(f)(1), the required portion of the recommended or advanced
18 high school curriculum in the manner described by Section
19 56.304(f)(2).

20 SECTION 3. This act applies beginning with the 2023-2024
21 school year.

22 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
23 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
24 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
25 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
26 Act takes effect September 1, 2023.