

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 1953

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a centers of excellence program developed by the Texas
Judicial Council and a merit payment for certain justices and
judges.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 71, Government Code, is
amended by adding Section 71.040 to read as follows:

Sec. 71.040. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE. (a) The council by
rule shall develop a centers of excellence program to identify,
support, and recognize justices and judges who excel in serving
their communities and in representing the judiciary. In awarding a
center of excellence recognition to a justice or judge, the council
must consider:

(1) a justice's or judge's governance, access,
fairness, case flow management, and court operations; and

(2) the compliance of the justice's or judge's court
with statutory or procedural requirements for judicial reporting,
court security, fee collection, indigent defense, and guardianship
fraud and abuse prevention.

(b) A justice or judge of an appellate court, district
court, statutory county court, or county court is eligible for
recognition as a center of excellence and may apply for recognition
on a form and in the manner prescribed by the council.

(c) In addition to the annual salary paid to a justice or

1 judge under Section 659.012, or by the commissioners court of a
2 county or the governing body of a municipality under any other law,
3 a justice or judge recognized as a center for excellence under the
4 centers of excellence program is entitled to receive in each state
5 fiscal year in which the justice or judge is recognized one merit
6 payment in an amount equal to five percent of the justice's or
7 judge's annual base salary for that year.

8 SECTION 2. The changes in law made by this Act apply only to
9 a justice or judge recognized under a centers of excellence program
10 developed by the Texas Judicial Council on or after the effective
11 date of this Act.

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