

By: Menéndez

S.B. No. 153

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1  
2 relating to establishing a social work recruitment and retention  
3 program administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating  
4 Board.

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

6 SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding  
7 Subchapter LL to read as follows:

8 SUBCHAPTER LL. SOCIAL WORK RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAM

9 Sec. 61.9851. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program"  
10 means the social work intern practicum stipend (SWIPS) program.

11 Sec. 61.9852. ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM.  
12 The board shall establish and administer a social work recruitment  
13 and retention program to provide an intern practicum stipend to  
14 assist students at institutions of higher education in obtaining  
15 field hours necessary for program coursework related to completing  
16 a bachelor's or master's degree in social work.

17 Sec. 61.9853. ELIGIBILITY; PRIORITY OF APPLICANTS. (a) To  
18 be eligible to receive a stipend under the program, a student must:

19 (1) apply to the board in the form and manner  
20 prescribed by board rule;

21 (2) be enrolled at an institution of higher education  
22 in an educational program that is accredited by the Council on  
23 Social Work Education leading to a bachelor's or master's degree in  
24 social work;

1           (3) be accepted into a practicum placement approved by  
2 the board for purposes of the program;

3           (4) enter into a written agreement with the board as  
4 provided by board rule; and

5           (5) satisfy any other criteria prescribed by board  
6 rule.

7           (b) The board shall establish a method for prioritizing  
8 applicants for practicum stipends in the event the total amount of  
9 money available to provide stipends under this subchapter for an  
10 academic year is not sufficient to provide a stipend to each  
11 applicant who is eligible under Subsection (a). The priority  
12 criteria must include:

13           (1) qualification for need-based aid based on free  
14 application for federal student aid (FAFSA) indicators; and

15           (2) practicum placement in a mental health  
16 professional shortage area designated by the Department of State  
17 Health Services.

18           Sec. 61.9854. PRACTICUM STIPEND AWARDS. (a) The amount of  
19 a practicum stipend award to which an eligible student is entitled  
20 is an amount equal to:

21           (1) for a student enrolled in a bachelor's degree  
22 program, \$15 per hour for each hour of supervised field hours in an  
23 approved practicum program, not to exceed a total of \$6,000; or

24           (2) for a student enrolled in a master's degree  
25 program, \$20 per hour for each hour of supervised field hours in an  
26 approved practicum program, not to exceed a total of \$9,000.

27           (b) Each academic year, the board shall provide money for

1 the practicum stipends to institutions of higher education with  
2 Council on Social Work Education-accredited educational programs  
3 based on the institution's anticipated need. Each institution shall  
4 determine the timeline and procedure for distributing the money for  
5 that academic year to eligible students based on the board's  
6 priority criteria adopted under Section 61.9853(b), if applicable.

7 (c) An institution of higher education shall remit to the  
8 board any unused money received by the institution under the  
9 program for an academic year as soon as practicable following that  
10 academic year.

11 Sec. 61.9855. PRIORITY OF INSTITUTIONS. The board shall  
12 establish a method for prioritizing institutions of higher  
13 education for distribution of practicum stipends in the event the  
14 total amount of money available to provide stipends under this  
15 subchapter for an academic year is not sufficient to provide money  
16 for stipends at each institution described by Section 61.9854(b).  
17 The priority criteria shall include:

18 (1) serving a high percentage of students who qualify  
19 for need-based aid based on free application for federal student  
20 aid (FAFSA) indicators;

21 (2) having a high number of students who complete  
22 practicum placements in mental health professional shortage areas  
23 designated by the Department of State Health Services; and

24 (3) designation as a historically black college or  
25 university or a Hispanic-serving institution.

26 Sec. 61.9856. REPORTS. (a) Each institution of higher  
27 education that receives money for practicum stipends under the

1 program for an academic year shall collect and submit data in the  
2 form of a report to the board each semester. The report must include  
3 information regarding:

4 (1) the amount of money distributed by the institution  
5 under the program for that semester;

6 (2) the number of participants in the program during  
7 that semester; and

8 (3) any other expenses incurred by the institution  
9 related to the program for that semester.

10 (b) Not later than September 1 of each even-numbered year,  
11 the board shall submit a report on the program to the governor, the  
12 lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives,  
13 and each standing committee of the legislature with primary  
14 jurisdiction over matters relating to finance. The report must  
15 include an analysis of the program's effectiveness and any  
16 recommendations for legislative or other action.

17 Sec. 61.9857. RULES. The board shall adopt rules necessary  
18 for the administration of this subchapter.

19 SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
20 shall adopt rules for the administration of Subchapter LL, Chapter  
21 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable  
22 after this Act takes effect.

23 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
24 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
25 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
26 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
27 Act takes effect September 1, 2025.