

By: West

S.B. No. 1401

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of the Texas Mental Health Profession Pipeline Program by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 61.070 to read as follows:

Sec. 61.070. TEXAS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSION PIPELINE PROGRAM. (a) In this section, "participating institution" means a general academic teaching institution or a private or independent institution of higher education that offers baccalaureate degree programs and postbaccalaureate degree and certificate programs.

(b) The board shall establish the Texas Mental Health Profession Pipeline Program and encourage participating institutions to develop pipeline programs for the purpose of providing a clear, guided pathway for public junior college students to transfer to a participating institution to pursue a baccalaureate degree or a postbaccalaureate degree or certificate leading to licensure and practice as:

(1) a psychologist, as defined by Section 501.002, Occupations Code;

(2) a licensed professional counselor, as defined by Section 503.002, Occupations Code;

(3) an advanced practice registered nurse, as defined by Section 301.152, Occupations Code, who holds a nationally

recognized board certification in psychiatric or mental health nursing;

(4) a licensed master social worker or a licensed clinical social worker, as defined by Section 505.002, Occupations Code;

(5) a licensed specialist in school psychology, as defined by Section 501.002, Occupations Code; or

(6) a licensed marriage and family therapist, as defined by Section 502.002, Occupations Code.

(c) A participating institution that develops a pipeline program under Subsection (b) shall:

(1) partner with one or more public junior colleges to create a guided pathway for public junior college students; and

(2) ensure that a public junior college student who completes a field of study curriculum or is awarded a "Texas Direct" associate degree under Section 61.834 and transfers to the participating institution:

(A) does not lose any credits earned before transferring;

(B) can earn a baccalaureate degree in less than two years following the transfer; and

(C) after earning a baccalaureate degree in an appropriate program as determined by the participating institution, is automatically admitted to a postbaccalaureate degree or certificate program at the participating institution if:

(i) the student meets the minimum academic requirements, as determined by the participating institution; and

1 (ii) the postbaccalaureate degree or
2 certificate program has the capacity to admit new students based
3 on:

4 (a) student-to-faculty ratios
5 required by state law, federal law, the appropriate accrediting
6 organization, or institutional policy; and

7 (b) the availability of clinical
8 placements and the faculty or preceptors that supervise those
9 placements.

10 (d) The board shall determine:

11 (1) the existing field of study curricula that a
12 participating institution may accept for purposes of Subsection
13 (c)(2); and

14 (2) any additional field of study curricula that a
15 participating institution may develop to enable a public junior
16 college student to fulfill the undergraduate curricular
17 requirements relevant for specialties described by Subsection (b).

18 (e) The board shall promote the program and maintain on the
19 board's Internet website information that clearly displays:

20 (1) information described by Subsection (d);

21 (2) a list of each pipeline program operating in this
22 state;

23 (3) a list of each participating institution that has
24 established a pipeline program;

25 (4) a map displaying the location of each
26 participating institution that has established a pipeline program;
27 and

1 (5) data regarding each pipeline program based on
2 information provided to the board under Subsection (f).

3 (f) Each participating institution shall submit an annual
4 report to the board that includes:

5 (1) the total number of students in the participating
6 institution's pipeline program;

7 (2) the number of students in the participating
8 institution's pipeline program who have transferred from a public
9 junior college to the participating institution without losing any
10 credits previously earned at the public junior college;

11 (3) the number of students in the participating
12 institution's pipeline program who in the preceding academic year
13 earned a baccalaureate degree from the participating institution
14 that was completed in two years or less;

15 (4) the capacity of the participating institution's
16 pipeline program to prepare more students for licensure and
17 practice as mental health professionals in specialties described by
18 Subsection (b);

19 (5) the financial resources allocated by the
20 participating institution to increase the number of students who
21 are able to complete their targeted degree or certificate program
22 under the participating institution's pipeline program; and

23 (6) the average time for a student to complete the
24 student's targeted degree or certificate program under the
25 participating institution's pipeline program from the date the
26 student enrolls in a public junior college to the date of the
27 student's graduation from the degree or certificate program.

1 (g) The board shall adopt rules consistent with this section
2 as necessary to implement this section, including rules for making
3 determinations under Subsection (d).

4 SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
5 shall adopt rules as required by Section 61.070(g), Education Code,
6 as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective
7 date of this Act.

8 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.