

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 1574

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1  
2 relating to a centers of excellence program developed by the Texas  
3 Judicial Council and a merit payment for certain justices and  
4 judges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (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 under any other law, a justice or judge recognized as a  
3 center of excellence under the centers of excellence program is  
4 entitled to receive in each state fiscal year in which the justice  
5 or judge is recognized one merit payment in an amount equal to five  
6 percent of the justice's or judge's annual base salary for that  
7 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, 2025.