

SUBJECT: Creating a community health care awareness program

COMMITTEE: Public Health — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Coleman, Capelo, Glaze, Longoria, Maxey, Uresti, Wohlgemuth
0 nays
2 absent — Gray, Delisi

WITNESSES: For — *Registered but did not testify*: Terry Boucher, Texas Osteopathic Medical Association; Greg Herzog, Texas Academy of Family Physicians; Marsha Jones, Texas Hospital Association; Robert Smith, Texas Academy of Physician Assistants; Jill Turner, Texas Farm Bureau; James Willmann, Texas Nurses Association

Against — None

On — Mike Easley, Center for Rural Health Initiatives; *Registered but did not testify*: Sam Tessen, Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund

DIGEST: CSHB 1124 would create a mentor program for high school students in rural or underserved urban areas who were interested in health professions. It would direct the Center for Rural Health Initiatives' executive committee to identify students and health-care professionals in rural or urban underserved areas who would participate in activities to introduce interested students to the spectrum of health careers. These activities could include health-care camps, shadowing of health-care professionals, or summer job opportunities. The center would have to establish a medical resource library for career information. The program also would serve as support for interested students who entered training programs to become health professionals.

The Center for Rural Health Initiatives could accept private donations and could work with similar state programs, such as those at the Texas Workforce Commission. Subject to availability of funds, the center would have to develop a grant program to support students in health training

programs. The first priority would be training programs that offered student internships.

A student in a training program who committed to work for at least one year in a rural or urban underserved area would be eligible to receive a grant. If a grantee did not fulfill the work requirement, the grantee would have to repay the grant plus a penalty amount.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1124 would encourage students to enter health professions. Mentor programs can give students a measure of support that can mean the difference between success and failure. The advice and guidance of a seasoned professional can give students who may not have many role models or may not have much exposure to health professions the support they need to realize their potential.

Texas needs more health professionals to work in urban underserved and rural areas. High school students from those areas would be ideal candidates, because they bring experience with the population, and they need careers that offer good employment opportunities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 1124 would create a state program that is not needed. Encouraging students to train for a health profession is a worthy goal, but one that local organizations should initiate and implement.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added chiropractors to the list of health-care professionals to which the program would apply.