

SUBJECT: Establishing a career to classroom program for public school teachers

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Sadler, Dunnam, Grusendorf, Hochberg, Oliveira, Olivo

0 nays

3 absent — Dutton, Hardcastle, Smith

WITNESSES: For — Rene Lara, Texas Federation of Teachers

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 704 would amend the Education Code to establish a careers to classroom program. The bill would assist people in obtaining elementary or secondary education certification and would facilitate their employment in districts with a disproportionate number of educationally-disadvantaged students and with shortages of qualified teachers or teacher's aides in science, math, computer science, and engineering.

To be eligible for the program, a person would need at least a bachelor's degree for a teaching position and at least an associate degree for a teacher's aide position. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) would have to establish application procedures for the program. Selection preference would be given to persons with substantial work experience in science, math, computer science, or engineering.

A person selected for the program would have to enter into a written agreement with TEA to obtain certification in a timely manner and to accept during the first year of certification an offer of full-time employment for at least two years with a public elementary or secondary school.

TEA would pay each program participant a stipend equal to the lesser of \$5,000 or an amount equal to the total costs of obtaining certification. If a person failed to obtain certification or voluntarily left before two years of full-time employment, the person would be required to reimburse TEA for the portion of the stipend that would equal the unused amount. The

obligation to reimburse TEA would be an interest-bearing debt to the state, and a declaration of bankruptcy would not release the person from the debt.

Participants would not have to pay the debt for a certain time period if they satisfied the provisions of any TEA reimbursement exception, or they were:

- ! studying full-time in a related field;
- ! on active military duty;
- ! temporarily totally disabled for up to three years as affirmed by a physician;
- ! unable to find a job for up to one year due to caring for a disabled spouse; or
- ! seeking and unable to find full-time employment as a teacher in a public elementary or secondary school for a single period up to 27 months.

A person could be excused from the debt if they became permanently totally disabled as established by affidavit of a qualified physician.

TEA could enter into an agreement with a qualified school district that employed a program participant. The state would pay the school district \$5,000 per year for that person for up to two years.

The education commissioner would have to adopt rules to implement the program. HB 704 would take effect September 1, 2001.

NOTES:

Based on analysis by TEA in the fiscal note, HB 704 would cost \$3.3 million through in fiscal 2002-03 due to costs of recruitment, application processing and procedures, and awarding stipends for an estimated 300 participants.