

SUBJECT: Extending eligibility for Homes for Texas Heroes to social workers

COMMITTEE: Urban Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Cortez, Holland, Bernal, Campos, Gates, Jarvis Johnson,
Minjarez, Slaton

0 nays

1 absent — Morales Shaw

WITNESSES: For — Alison Mohr Boleware and Ali Smith, National Association of
Social Workers (*Registered, but did not testify*: Greg Hansch, National
Alliance on Mental Illness Texas; Bri Sowers, National Association of
Social Workers - Texas; Lee Johnson, Texas Council of Community
Centers; Alycia Castillo; Jessica Riley)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joniel Levecque and Michael Wilt,
Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation)

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 2306.5621 establishes the Homes for Texas
Heroes loan program under the Texas State Affordable Housing
Corporation to provide low-interest home mortgage loans to fire fighters,
peace officers, corrections officers, county jailers, public security officers,
emergency medical services personnel, professional educators, and
veterans. To be eligible for the program, a person must reside in the state
and have an income of no more than 115 percent of area median family
income or the maximum amount permitted by the Internal Revenue Code
of 1986, whichever is greater.

DIGEST: HB 2670 would extend eligibility for participation in the Homes for Texas
Heroes program to licensed social workers.

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, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2670 would incentivize the growth of a much-needed service profession by making low-interest home loans available to social workers. By offering this incentive, the bill would encourage the pursuit of licensure in social work and contribute to the stability of the state's mental health workforce.

Social workers were deemed essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they are an important part of interdisciplinary care teams in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, non-profits, corporations, the military, and all levels of government. Social workers already work closely with many of the other professions covered by the Homes for Texas Heroes programs, so it would be reasonable and beneficial to include them in the program. The funds needed are already secure and would be able to help many social workers, whose salaries are typically well within the program's eligibility requirements.

The bill would not establish any new government program or appropriate any new funds but would benefit the state by using an existing program to attract workers to a profession that provides a crucial public service.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 2670's extension of the state's low-interest loan program to social workers is inappropriate because subsidizing home mortgage loans is not a proper role for government.