(A) career and technical certificates;
(B) associate's degrees;
(C) bachelor's degrees; and
(D) graduate degrees; or
(2) incorporate career and technical courses into dual enrollment courses or into the early college education program under Section 29.908 to provide students the opportunity to earn a career or technical certificate or associate's degree.

(f) From among the school districts and institutions of higher education that apply as required under this section, the commissioner shall select those school districts and institutions of higher education that present the plans that are most likely to be effective in producing the next generation of higher performing public schools and institutions of higher education that provide education and training in an innovative form and manner to prepare students for careers for which there is demand in this state.

(g) The commissioner shall convene program leaders periodically to discuss methods to transform learning opportunities for all students, build cross-institution support systems and training, and share best practices tools and processes.

(h) A school district or institution of higher education participating in the program or the commissioner may, for purposes of this section, accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a private or governmental entity.

(i) To cover the costs of administering the program, the commissioner may charge a fee to a school district or institution of higher education participating in the program.

(j) In consultation with interested school districts, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate interested persons, the commissioner shall adopt rules as necessary for purposes of this section.

(k) Not later than December 1, 2014, and not later than December 1, 2016, with the assistance of school districts and institutions of higher education participating in the program, the commissioner shall submit to the governor and the legislature reports concerning the performance and progress of the program participants. The report submitted not later than December 1, 2014, must include any recommendation by the commissioner concerning legislative authorization necessary for the commissioner to waive a prohibition, requirement, or restriction that applies to a program participant and other school district or institution of higher education interested in beginning a similar program. To prepare for implementation of a commissioner waiver, the commissioner shall seek any necessary federal waiver. This subsection expires January 1, 2020.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2013.

Passed by the House on May 2, 2013: Yeas 147, Nays 0, 2 present, not voting; passed by the Senate on May 22, 2013: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Approved June 10, 2013.
Effective June 10, 2013.

CHAPTER 216

S.B. No. 441

AN ACT
relating to the establishment of the Texas Fast Start Program to promote rapid delivery of workforce education and development.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, is amended by adding Section 302.0032 to read as follows:
Sec. 302.0032. TEXAS FAST START PROGRAM. (a) In this section:

(1) “Fast start program” means a career and technical education program designed to help students earn postsecondary certificates and degrees and enter into the workforce quickly.

(2) “Public junior college,” “public state college,” and “public technical institute” have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

(b) The commission, in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, shall establish and administer the Texas Fast Start Program to identify and develop methods to support, and shall provide support for, competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models for use by public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes. The models must be designed to assist students in maximizing academic or workforce education program credit from public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to expedite the entry of those students into the workforce.

(c) The commission shall work collaboratively with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(d) A public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute may use the competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models described by Subsection (b) in developing or expanding a fast start program at the college or institute.

(e) A fast start program offered by a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute must:

(1) focus on the current and future needs of employers in this state;

(2) enable students to obtain postsecondary certificates and degrees at an accelerated pace in high-demand fields or occupations, as identified by local employers;

(3) incorporate competency-based learning techniques;

(4) feature a variety of access channels that are uniquely designed to maximize job preparedness for identified groups such as veterans, high school graduates, and current workforce members seeking retraining; and

(5) be designed for rapid deployment statewide.

(f) Through the collaboration, the commission may award grants to public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes for:

(1) the expansion of existing fast start programs;

(2) the development of new fast start programs; and

(3) any other activities related to the purposes of this section.

(g) A grant received under this section may be used only to:

(1) support a course or program that prepares students for career employment in fields or occupations that are identified as high-demand by local employers;

(2) finance the initial costs of developing a fast start program, including the costs of constructing or renovating facilities, purchasing equipment, and other associated expenses;

(3) finance the development or expansion of a fast start program leading to a postsecondary certificate or degree; or

(4) offer a new or expanded dual credit fast start program jointly with a public high school.

(h) The commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall administer the program using money appropriated to the commission or board, money received from federal or other sources, or money from holding accounts that may be used by the commission for the purpose of skills development.

(i) The commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board may adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.
SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2013.

Passed the Senate on March 26, 2013: Yeas 31, Nays 0; passed the House on May 15, 2013: Yeas 147, Nays 0, two present not voting.

Approved June 10, 2013.

Effective June 10, 2013.

CHAPTER 217

H.B. No. 15

AN ACT
relating to level of care designations for hospitals that provide neonatal and maternal services.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas:

SECTION 1. Chapter 241, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Subchapter H to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER H. HOSPITAL LEVEL OF CARE DESIGNATIONS FOR NEONATAL AND MATERNAL CARE

Sec. 241.181. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:
(1) "Department" means the Department of State Health Services.
(2) "Executive commissioner" means the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission.

Sec. 241.182. LEVEL OF CARE DESIGNATIONS. (a) The executive commissioner, in accordance with the rules adopted under Section 241.183, shall assign level of care designations to each hospital based on the neonatal and maternal services provided at the hospital.
(b) A hospital may receive different level designations for neonatal and maternal care, respectively.

Sec. 241.183. RULES. (a) The executive commissioner, in consultation with the department, shall adopt rules:
(1) establishing the levels of care for neonatal and maternal care to be assigned to hospitals;
(2) prescribing criteria for designating levels of neonatal and maternal care, respectively, including specifying the minimum requirements to qualify for each level designation;
(3) establishing a process for the assignment of levels of care to each hospital for neonatal and maternal care, respectively;
(4) establishing a process for amending the level of care designation requirements, including a process for assisting facilities in implementing any changes made necessary by the amendments;
(5) dividing the state into neonatal and maternal care regions;
(6) facilitating transfer agreements through regional coordination;
(7) requiring payment, other than quality or outcome-based funding, to be based on services provided by the facility, regardless of the facility's level of care designation; and
(8) prohibiting the denial of a neonatal or maternal level of care designation to a hospital that meets the minimum requirements for that level of care designation.
(b) The criteria for levels one through three of neonatal and maternal care adopted under Subsection (a)(2) may not include requirements related to the number of patients treated at a hospital.