

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 1575
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Education
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Engrossed

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, there is a shortage of dental hygienists in the rural areas of Texas. Students in dental hygienist schools often must take out student loans to cover the cost of tuition. To pay back these loans, these graduates may feel compelled to take higher paying jobs in urban areas, potentially causing a shortage of qualified dental hygienists in rural areas. H.B. 1575 provides student loan repayment assistance for dental hygienists who practice in underserved areas of Texas.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.9408, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

H.B. 1575 amends the Education Code to authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) to provide assistance in the repayment of student loans for dental hygienists who apply and have practiced dental hygiene under a license for at least one year in an area of the state that is underserved with respect to dental hygiene services. The bill authorizes a dental hygienist to receive repayment assistance grants for not more than five years. The bill authorizes the board to provide repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan for the costs of attendance in any higher education course work before the person received a degree or certificate in dental hygiene or while enrolled in a dental hygiene program. The bill prohibits the board from providing repayment assistance for a student loan that is in default at the time of the dental hygienist's application. The bill requires the board to deliver any repayment in a lump sum payable to the lender and the dental hygienist.

The bill authorizes the board to appoint advisory committees to assist the board in performing its duties and to request the assistance of the Oral Health Services Advisory Committee in performing those duties. The bill requires the board to adopt rules to administer the provisions of the bill, including a rule that sets a maximum amount of repayment assistance that may be received by a dental hygienist in one year not later than December 1, 2002. The bill authorizes the board to consult with the Oral Health Services Advisory Committee to assist in establishing priorities among eligible dental hygienists for repayment assistance. The bill requires the board to distribute to each dental hygiene school in this state and to appropriate state agencies and professional associations copies of the rules adopted under these provisions and other pertinent information.

The bill prohibits the board from distributing repayment assistance exceeding the total amount of funds available to the board for that purpose. The bill requires the governing board of each institution of higher education authorized by the board to award a degree or certificate in dental hygiene to set aside two percent of tuition charges for resident students enrolled in the degree program. The bill requires the governing board of each institution of higher education to transfer the amount set aside to the comptroller of public accounts to be maintained in the state treasury for the sole purpose of repayment of student loans of dental hygienists.

Effective date: September 1, 2001.