

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1757
By: Creighton
Higher Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

During the 83rd Regular Session, the Math and Science Scholars Repayment Program was established by the Legislature. The program was created to address the issue of a critical shortage of certified mathematics and science teachers in Texas public schools. Through the program, certified teachers could apply for repayment assistance on student loans in exchange for their annual service to teaching mathematics or science in a federal Title I school, where 40 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Repayment assistance under the program is provided by the Mathematics and Science Teacher Investment Fund. The fund is a dedicated account in general revenue and consists of gifts, grants, donations, interest and other earnings from the fund's investment.

Eligibility requirements include:

- Completed an undergraduate or graduate program in mathematics or science.
- Earned a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 on a four point scale, or the equivalent.
- Cannot receive any other state or federal loan repayment assistance.
- Must agree to provide eight years of service.

The first four years of service must be in a Texas public school that receives federal funding under Title I, while the other four years may be in any public school in Texas. Between 2016-2018, a total of 78 applications have been submitted and only 19 teachers qualified for the repayment program by meeting all the eligibility requirements. Of the 59 applicants that failed to qualify for the program during that time, 24 of them did not meet the 3.5 GPA requirement.

S.B. 1757 would amend the Education Code regarding requirements for participation in the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program. The GPA requirement for graduates of mathematics or science programs changes from 3.5 to 3.0. Additionally, the requirement that qualifying applicants enter into an agreement that extends the teaching requirement to four additional years after teaching in a Title I school would be amended.

S.B. 1757 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to prescribe a number of consecutive school years a program recipient must teach after the four year commitment at a Title I school. This prescribed rule may not require a person to complete more than four additional consecutive school years of teaching. S.B. 1757 would increase the number of teachers that qualify for and benefit from the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program. This would also improve recruitment and retention of math and science teachers in Texas. (Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 1757 amends current law relating to student loan repayment assistance under the math and science scholars loan repayment program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.9832, Education Code, by amending Subsections (a) and (c) and adding Subsection (c-1), as follows:

(a) Requires a person, to be eligible to receive loan repayments assistance under this subchapter (Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program) to meet certain requirements, including a requirement to have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0, rather than a 3.5, on a four-point scale or the equivalent.

(c) Requires a person, to receive loan repayment assistance under this subchapter, to enter into an agreement with the board that includes the following provisions:

(1)–(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions;

(3) beginning with the school year immediately following the last of the four consecutive school years described by Subdivision (2), the person will complete an additional number of consecutive school years, rather than four additional consecutive school years, teaching in any public school in this state, as prescribed by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rule; and

(4) makes no changes to this subdivision.

(c-1) Prohibits the rules adopted under Subsection (c)(3) from requiring a person to complete more than four additional consecutive school years of teaching as described by that subdivision.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.9835(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes THECB to provide repayment assistance under this subchapter for the repayment of any student loan that is for education at certain entities or a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. (a) Requires THECB, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to adopt rules necessary to administer Section 61.9832, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

(b) Makes application of Section 61.9832, Education Code, as amended by this Act, prospective.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2019.