

By: West

S.B. No. 204

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to student loan repayment assistance for certain employees of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter N to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER N. REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF  
FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES EMPLOYEES

Sec. 61.731. REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED. The board shall establish a program to provide, using funds appropriated for that purpose and in accordance with this subchapter and rules of the board, assistance in the repayment of student loans for employees of the Department of Family and Protective Services who apply and qualify for the assistance.

Sec. 61.732. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible to receive repayment assistance, a person must:

(1) apply to the board; and

(2) have been employed for at least one year as, and be currently employed full-time at the Department of Family and Protective Services as:

(A) a child protective services family-based safety services caseworker;

(B) a child protective services investigator;

(C) a child-care licensing investigator or

1 inspector; or

2 (D) a residential child-care licensing  
3 investigator or inspector.

4 Sec. 61.733. AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE; LIMITATION.

5 (a) For each year that a person meets the eligibility requirements  
6 provided by Section 61.732, the person may receive repayment  
7 assistance under this subchapter in an amount determined by board  
8 rule, not to exceed \$2,500.

9 (b) A person may not receive repayment assistance under this  
10 subchapter for more than four years.

11 (c) If the money available for repayment assistance in a  
12 period for which assistance is awarded is insufficient to provide  
13 assistance to all eligible applicants, the board shall award  
14 repayment assistance to eligible applicants by prioritizing awards  
15 to applicants employed in regions of this state experiencing the  
16 highest combined turnover rate for the employee positions listed in  
17 Section 61.732.

18 Sec. 61.734. ELIGIBLE LOANS. The board may provide  
19 repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan for  
20 education at a public or private institution of higher education,  
21 including loans for undergraduate education and graduate  
22 education, issued through any eligible lender, as defined by board  
23 rule.

24 Sec. 61.735. REPAYMENT. (a) The board shall deliver any  
25 repayment assistance made under this subchapter in a lump sum  
26 directly to the eligible lender or other holder of the loan on the  
27 person's behalf and in accordance with any applicable federal law.

1        (b) Repayment assistance received under this subchapter may  
2 be applied to the principal amount of the loan and to interest that  
3 accrues.

4        Sec. 61.736. FUNDING. (a) The repayment assistance  
5 program established by this subchapter is funded only from  
6 appropriations made specifically to fund the program and from  
7 gifts, grants, and donations. The board shall attempt to provide  
8 repayment assistance in each state fiscal biennium in amounts  
9 sufficient to use all amounts appropriated for the program in that  
10 biennium.

11        (b) The board may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and  
12 donations from any public or private source for the purposes of this  
13 subchapter.

14        Sec. 61.737. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules  
15 necessary for the administration of this subchapter, including a  
16 rule that establishes the amount of repayment assistance awarded to  
17 eligible persons each year.

18        (b) The board shall distribute to each institution of higher  
19 education, the Department of Family and Protective Services, and  
20 appropriate professional associations copies of the rules adopted  
21 under this section and pertinent information in this subchapter.

22        SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
23 shall adopt the initial rules for the repayment assistance program  
24 under Subchapter N, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this  
25 Act, not later than December 1, 2017, if funds are appropriated for  
26 the purposes of this subchapter by an Act of the 85th Legislature,  
27 Regular Session, 2017.

1       SECTION 3.   This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.