

86th Legislature

Student Loan Assistance Program for Nurses in Long-Term Care Settings

HB 3111 by Representative Stephanie Klick

SB 2300 by Senator Beverly Powell

BACKGROUND

Texans are aging. Between 2010 and 2030 the number of Texans over 60 will more than double. A recent report by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services projects Texas to have the largest increase in demand for overall LTSS nursing care provided by RNs and LPNs between 2015 and 2030. It is estimated that 70% of Americans 65+ will need some form of long-term services and supports in the future.

A 2016 study by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies showed that the state will be 60,000 nurses short of demand by 2030. In the same study, projections show that demand for nurses in long-term care settings (nursing homes) will double between 2015 and 2030.

In 2017, the same state agency reported that long-term care facilities had the highest vacancy rate of any practice area for registered nurses in the state at 18.9%, more than double the vacancy rate of hospitals (8.1%).

The current workforce shortage in long-term care poses a threat to patient safety, as adequate staffing levels are the primary indicator of quality care in these settings. High vacancy and turnover also increase workload and stress levels of existing staff and places greater financial strain on nursing homes that rely on government funding sources as the primary payor (Medicare and Medicaid).

Finally, growing levels of student loan debt increases the financial pressure on new nurses forcing them to pursue careers in healthcare settings based on pay rather than their passion.

PURPOSE

HB 3111 and SB 2300 establishes a student loan assistance grant program to be administrated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board specifically for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, Registered Nurses and Licensed Vocational Nurses who meet eligibility criteria for application, including full-time employment by a long-term care facility (nursing home) for at least one year.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board may solicit and accept gifts and grants from any public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

A student loan assistance program available to nurses who work in long-term care will offer more opportunity for new nurses, improve quality care for aging Texans and generate potential long-term cost savings for the state.

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