

1-1 By: West S.B. No. 646  
 1-2 (In the Senate - Filed December 18, 2024; February 3, 2025,  
 1-3 read first time and referred to Committee on Education K-16;  
 1-4 April 16, 2025, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 10,  
 1-5 Nays 1; April 16, 2025, sent to printer.)

1-6 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-7				
1-8	X			
1-9		X		
1-10	X			
1-11	X			
1-12	X			
1-13	X			
1-14	X			
1-15	X			
1-16	X			
1-17	X			
1-18	X			

1-19 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
 1-20 AN ACT

1-21 relating to repayment of certain mental health professional  
 1-22 education loans.

1-23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-24 SECTION 1. Section 61.601, Education Code, is amended to  
 1-25 read as follows:

1-26 Sec. 61.601. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "mental  
 1-27 health professional" means:

1-28 (1) a licensed physician who is:

1-29 (A) a graduate of an accredited psychiatric  
 1-30 residency training program; or

1-31 (B) certified in psychiatry by:

1-32 (i) the American Board of Psychiatry and  
 1-33 Neurology; or

1-34 (ii) the American Osteopathic Board of  
 1-35 Neurology and Psychiatry;

1-36 (2) a psychologist, as defined by Section 501.002,  
 1-37 Occupations Code;

1-38 (3) a licensed professional counselor, as defined by  
 1-39 Section 503.002, Occupations Code;

1-40 (4) an advanced practice registered nurse, as defined  
 1-41 by Section 301.152, Occupations Code, who holds a nationally  
 1-42 recognized board certification in psychiatric or mental health  
 1-43 nursing;

1-44 (5) a licensed clinical social worker, as defined by  
 1-45 Section 505.002, Occupations Code;

1-46 (6) a licensed specialist in school psychology, as  
 1-47 defined by Section 501.002, Occupations Code;

1-48 (7) a chemical dependency counselor, as defined by  
 1-49 Section 504.001, Occupations Code; ~~and~~

1-50 (8) a licensed marriage and family therapist, as  
 1-51 defined by Section 502.002, Occupations Code;

1-52 (9) a licensed master social worker, as defined by  
 1-53 Section 505.002, Occupations Code;

1-54 (10) a person who holds a licensed professional  
 1-55 counselor associate license issued by the Texas State Board of  
 1-56 Examiners of Professional Counselors;

1-57 (11) a licensed marriage and family therapist  
 1-58 associate, as defined by Section 502.002, Occupations Code; and

1-59 (12) a school counselor certified under Subchapter B,  
 1-60 Chapter 21, who has earned at least a master's degree related to  
 1-61 counseling from any public or accredited private institution of

2-1 higher education.

2-2 SECTION 2. Section 61.603, Education Code, as amended by  
2-3 Chapters 678 (H.B. 1211), 705 (H.B. 2100), and 1069 (S.B. 532), Acts  
2-4 of the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, is reenacted and  
2-5 amended to read as follows:

2-6 Sec. 61.603. ELIGIBILITY. (a) Except as provided by  
2-7 Subsection (b), to be eligible to receive repayment assistance  
2-8 under this subchapter, a mental health professional must:

2-9 (1) apply to the board;

2-10 (2) have completed one, two, or three consecutive  
2-11 years of practice in a mental health professional shortage area  
2-12 designated by the Department of State Health Services; and

2-13 (3) provide mental health services in this state to:

2-14 (A) recipients under the medical assistance  
2-15 program authorized by Chapter 32, Human Resources Code;

2-16 (B) enrollees under the child health plan program  
2-17 authorized by Chapter 62, Health and Safety Code; or

2-18 (C) persons committed to a secure correctional  
2-19 facility operated by or under contract with the Texas Juvenile  
2-20 Justice Department or persons confined in a secure correctional  
2-21 facility operated by or under contract with any division of the  
2-22 Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

2-23 (b) A mental health professional may also establish  
2-24 eligibility for the repayment assistance under this subchapter by  
2-25 satisfying the requirements of this subsection. To establish  
2-26 eligibility under this subsection, the mental health professional  
2-27 must:

2-28 (1) apply to the board;

2-29 (2) provide mental health services to:

2-30 (A) patients in a state hospital, as defined by  
2-31 Section 552.0011, Health and Safety Code; ~~or~~

2-32 (B) individuals receiving community-based mental  
2-33 health services from a local mental health authority that provides  
2-34 the services in accordance with Subchapter B, Chapter 534, Health  
2-35 and Safety Code; or

2-36 (C) students enrolled in a public school in this  
2-37 state; and

2-38 (3) have completed one, two, or three consecutive  
2-39 years of practice in this state as described by Subdivision (2).

2-40 SECTION 3. Section 61.604(d), Education Code, is amended to  
2-41 read as follows:

2-42 (d) Notwithstanding Subsection (c), if in a state fiscal  
2-43 year not all funds available for purposes of the program are used,  
2-44 the [The] board may allocate any unused funds to award repayment  
2-45 assistance grants to mental health professionals in any of the  
2-46 professions listed in Section 61.601 [award a grant under this  
2-47 subchapter to a mental health professional described by Section  
2-48 61.601(8) only in accordance with Subsection (e)].

2-49 SECTION 4. Section 61.607, Education Code, is amended by  
2-50 amending Subsections (a) and (b) and adding Subsections (b-1) and  
2-51 (b-2) to read as follows:

2-52 (a) A mental health professional may receive repayment  
2-53 assistance under this subchapter for each year the mental health  
2-54 professional establishes eligibility for the assistance in an  
2-55 amount determined by applying the following applicable percentage  
2-56 to the ~~[maximum total]~~ amount of assistance allowed for the mental  
2-57 health professional under Subsection (b):

2-58 (1) for the first year, 33.33 percent;

2-59 (2) for the second year, 33.33 percent; and

2-60 (3) for the third year, 33.33 percent.

2-61 (b) Subject to Subsection (b-2), the [The total] amount of  
2-62 repayment assistance received by a mental health professional under  
2-63 this subchapter may not exceed:

2-64 (1) \$180,000 ~~[\$160,000]~~, for assistance from the state  
2-65 received by a licensed physician;

2-66 (2) \$100,000 ~~[\$80,000]~~, for assistance from the state  
2-67 received by:

2-68 (A) a psychologist;

2-69 (B) a licensed clinical social worker, if the

3-1 social worker has received a doctoral degree related to social  
3-2 work;

3-3 (C) a licensed professional counselor, if the  
3-4 counselor has received a doctoral degree related to counseling; or  
3-5 (D) a licensed marriage and family therapist, if  
3-6 the marriage and family therapist has received a doctoral degree  
3-7 related to marriage and family therapy;

3-8 (3) \$80,000 [~~\$60,000~~], for assistance from the state  
3-9 received by an advanced practice registered nurse;

3-10 (4) \$60,000 [~~\$40,000~~], for assistance from the state  
3-11 received by:

3-12 (A) a licensed clinical social worker, a licensed  
3-13 marriage and family therapist, or a licensed professional counselor  
3-14 who is not described by Subdivision (2); [~~or~~]

3-15 (B) a licensed specialist in school psychology;

3-16 (C) a licensed master social worker;

3-17 (D) a person who holds a licensed professional  
3-18 counselor associate license issued by the Texas State Board of  
3-19 Examiners of Professional Counselors;

3-20 (E) a licensed marriage and family therapist  
3-21 associate; or

3-22 (F) a certified school counselor described by  
3-23 Section 61.601(12); [~~and~~]

3-24 (5) \$50,000, for assistance from the state received by  
3-25 a licensed chemical dependency counselor, if the chemical  
3-26 dependency counselor has received within the same 12-month period  
3-27 the counselor's:

3-28 (A) license; and

3-29 (B) most recent degree applicable to the  
3-30 counselor's licensing eligibility requirements; and

3-31 (6) \$15,000 [~~\$10,000~~], for assistance from the state  
3-32 received by a licensed chemical dependency counselor, if the  
3-33 chemical dependency counselor has received at least an associate  
3-34 degree related to chemical dependency counseling or behavioral  
3-35 science and if the counselor is not otherwise described by  
3-36 Subdivision (5).

3-37 (b-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a) or (b), a mental  
3-38 health professional who receives repayment assistance under this  
3-39 subchapter is eligible to receive repayment assistance in addition  
3-40 to the amount specified by Subsection (b) as follows:

3-41 (1) a one-time amount of \$5,000 for a mental health  
3-42 professional who is fluent in a language of need in the  
3-43 professional's practice area as determined by the board;

3-44 (2) a one-time amount of \$10,000 for a mental health  
3-45 professional who practices in a county with a population of 150,000  
3-46 or less; and

3-47 (3) notwithstanding Section 61.604(a), \$15,000 per  
3-48 year for a mental health professional who practices in the manner  
3-49 described by Section 61.603 for a fourth and fifth consecutive  
3-50 year.

3-51 (b-2) The total amount of repayment assistance issued to a  
3-52 mental health professional under Subsections (b) and (b-1) may not  
3-53 exceed the amount described by Subsection (b) for the applicable  
3-54 profession plus 10 percent of that amount.

3-55 SECTION 5. Section 61.608, Education Code, is amended by  
3-56 amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsection (f) to read as  
3-57 follows:

3-58 (c) The board shall adopt rules establishing a process for  
3-59 allocating any unused funds under the program in a state fiscal year  
3-60 in accordance with Section 61.604(d) [~~61.604(e)~~].

3-61 (f) The board may use funds, in an amount not to exceed \$1  
3-62 million appropriated for purposes of this subchapter, to market the  
3-63 program to students enrolled in postsecondary institutions, mental  
3-64 health professionals, and mental health professional organizations  
3-65 and associations and may contract with a third party for the  
3-66 purpose. The board or third party may develop marketing plans or  
3-67 promotional materials to market the program.

3-68 SECTION 6. Section 61.604(e), Education Code, is  
3-69 repealed.

4-1 SECTION 7. (a) The changes in law made by this Act to  
4-2 Sections 61.603 and 61.607, Education Code, apply only to a person  
4-3 who first establishes eligibility for loan repayment assistance  
4-4 under Subchapter K, Chapter 61, Education Code, as amended by this  
4-5 Act, on the basis of an application submitted on or after September  
4-6 1, 2025. A person who first establishes eligibility on the basis of  
4-7 an application submitted before September 1, 2025, is governed by  
4-8 the law in effect at the time the application was submitted, and the  
4-9 former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

4-10 (b) The changes in law made by this Act to Section 61.604,  
4-11 Education Code, apply beginning with the state fiscal year  
4-12 beginning September 1, 2025.

4-13 SECTION 8. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

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