

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
84R9917 JSL-F

S.B. 1438  
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Higher Education  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

S.B. 1438 authorizes public sources to fund the student loan repayment assistance program for speech-language pathologists and audiologists employed by public schools or, in certain programs, by public institutions of higher education.

Independent school districts in Texas currently face an extreme shortage of full-time qualified speech-language pathologists and audiologists necessary to meet the educational needs of students with speech disorders, especially in under-resourced inner-city and rural districts. A key reason for the shortage in these districts is that practicing in the profession requires an advanced degree, and practitioners often graduate with considerable student loan debt, causing them to gravitate toward positions that pay more than smaller and less wealthy school districts.

To help address the problem, the 83rd Legislature created a student loan repayment assistance program for speech-language pathologists and audiologists employed by public schools or, in certain programs, at public institutions of higher education. The program has had some success in attracting qualified persons to work in historically underserved areas but is limited by the fact that current law provides no public funding for the program; funding must come “solely from gifts, grants, and donations solicited and accepted by” the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. So far, the bulk of the program’s funding has come from a one-time, non-repeatable donation by the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA), the leading trade association for the profession.

The bill would amend the Education Code to provide that, in addition to gifts, grants, and donations, the student loan repayment assistance program also may be funded from fees collected under the chapter of the Occupations Code that regulates audiologists and speech pathologists in excess of what is necessary to administer that chapter. The bill also removes the word “solely” from the section on funding sources

As proposed, S.B. 1438 amends current law relating to funding sources for the repayment of certain speech-language pathologist and audiologist education loans.

### **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 61.9818, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.9818. PROGRAM FUNDING. Authorizes the program to be funded from, rather than solely from:

- (1) Creates this subdivision from existing text; and
- (2) fees collected under Chapter 401 (Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists), Occupations Code, in excess of the money required to pay the expenses for the administration of that chapter.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 401.204, Occupations Code, by adding Subsection (c), as follows:

(c) Authorizes any money from fees collected by the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (board) under this chapter that remains after payment of the expenses for the administration of this chapter to be used to fund the loan repayment program established under Subchapter II (Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program), Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by Chapter 133 (S.B. 620), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 15, 2015.