

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2445
By: White
Corrections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been noted that veterans who are incarcerated have many compounding factors that impact their reintegration and reentry into society. As such, stakeholder groups have suggested that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) should have an inventory of all federal and state benefits eligible to incarcerated veterans and have strategies to leverage these benefits to enhance rehabilitation, housing and education opportunities, medical and psychiatric access, and financial support for veterans reentering society. H.B. 2445 seeks to use federal resources to better support incarcerated veterans who are reintegrating into society.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2445 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the successful reentry or reintegration into the community following discharge from TDCJ of offenders whose veteran status has been verified by TDCJ. The bill requires the plan to utilize all benefits for which the offender is eligible to provide for the following, as applicable, after the offender's discharge:

- housing;
- employment;
- education;
- financial support for the offender's family; and
- medical or mental health care.

The bill authorizes TDCJ to contract with private vendors or other entities to implement the comprehensive reentry and reintegration plan. The bill requires TDCJ to use the best available federal data to assist inmates who are veterans in applying for state benefits or compensation for which the inmates may be eligible under any state law or program.

H.B. 2445 requires the community justice assistance division of TDCJ to require each community supervision and corrections department to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to:

- determine if a defendant placed on community supervision is a veteran; and
- assist the defendant in obtaining any federal or state veterans benefits for which the defendant is eligible to provide for the following, as applicable, during the defendant's term of community supervision:

- housing;
- employment;
- education;
- financial support for the defendant's family; and
- medical or mental health care.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.