

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2517
By: Meza
County Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The suicide of Chad Silvis in 2014 in the Kemah, Texas, municipal jail brought attention to the fact that municipal jails and lockups are more loosely regulated by the state than their county counterparts. Specifically, the incident raised concerns over the fact that municipal jailers, or police officers supervising municipal jails, are not required to receive the same type of suicide prevention and screening training as county jailers. C.S.H.B. 2517 seeks to address these concerns by requiring suicide prevention training for each jailer or person responsible for supervising inmates in municipal jails, mental health screenings during the intake process, and the use of cameras and regular checks on those identified as potentially suicidal.

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

C.S.H.B. 2517 amends the Local Government Code to require a municipal jail to do the following:

- provide two hours of training to each jailer or person responsible for the supervision of a person confined in the jail on the procedures for identifying, documenting, and handling a person who is potentially suicidal or has a mental health condition;
- conduct and document mental health screenings during the intake process;
- house in a cell with cameras any person who is identified as potentially suicidal;
- regularly check on each such person; and
- report to the attorney general, in the manner prescribed by the attorney general, any incident involving the suicide or attempted suicide of a person confined in the jail not later than 48 hours after the incident.

The attorney general may use that reported information only for purposes of data collection and analysis.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2517 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the original required the Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS) to require each municipal jail or lockup to take certain actions regarding suicide prevention, the substitute requires a municipal jail instead to take those actions. With respect to the actions, the original and substitute differ as follows:

- the substitute does not include a requirement included in the original for each municipal jail or lockup to house in a cell with cameras any person who discloses a previous diagnosis for a mental health condition; and
- the substitute requires a municipal jail to report to the attorney general any incident involving the suicide or attempted suicide of a person confined in the jail by a specified deadline, whereas the original required each municipal jail or lockup to report to TCJS any such incident of a person confined in the jail or lockup by that deadline.