

SUBJECT: Requiring licensed physicians to provide emergency contact information

COMMITTEE: Public Health — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Delisi, Jackson, Cohen, Gonzales, S. King, Olivo, Truitt
0 nays
2 absent — Laubenberg, Coleman

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 28 — 30-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dale L Austin, Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States; Dan Finch, Texas Medical Association)
Against — None
On — Jaime Garanflo, Texas Medical Board

BACKGROUND: Occupations Code, ch. 156 requires each licensed physician in Texas to register with the Texas Medical Board every two years. An initial registration permit is issued along with a license to practice.

DIGEST: CSSB 591 would add sec. 156.006 to require each licensed physician to submit to TMB telephone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses, if available and as appropriate, for use to contact the physician in the event of an emergency. A physician who received an initial registration would have to provide the information within 30 days following the issuance of a permit. Physicians would have to submit the required information upon applying for license renewal. Physicians also would have to report to TMB any revised information within 45 days of the date the information changed.

In the event of a public health emergency declared or invoked by the governor, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), or a federal agency, TMB would be able to publish, release, or otherwise make available information provided by a physician exclusively for

disseminating information to another licensed physician, a designated political subdivision, a federal public health or emergency management official, or the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB).

Information submitted would be confidential and exempt from the Texas Public Information Act. TMB would be able to make use of the information only for the purpose of contacting a physician in the event of an emergency and for the emergency-related purposes described above. All licensed physicians would have to submit the required information by December 1, 2007.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSSB 591 is necessary to enable TMB to contact available physicians for assistance in the event of a major emergency. Emergencies and natural disasters, such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita, demonstrated the essential need for the state to communicate with medical personnel who provide critical services for the injured and sick. Current registration practices do not provide enough information to contact physicians in an emergency scenario. While TMB has records of registered and licensed physicians, it has no means of reaching these doctors to facilitate the coordination of medical response efforts.

CSSB 591 would help the state and local governments effectively respond in a declared emergency. The bill includes clear, explicit provisions that would prohibit the release of any required information through open records requests or to unauthorized individuals. Required information could not be used except in the event of an emergency declared by appropriate governmental entities. Information disseminated during an emergency also could be used by FSMB to coordinate the release of information between and among states. FSMB would be able to send mass e-mail and fax notifications updating medical offices with the latest information and advisories about national health crises.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The House committee substitute to the Senate-passed bill would authorize the release of physician contact information to the designated entities in

the event of a public health emergency declared by the governor, DSHS,
or a federal agency.