

**SUBJECT:** Establishing a statewide homelessness data system

**COMMITTEE:** Urban Affairs — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Cortez, Bernal, Campos, Gates, Jarvis Johnson, Minjarez, Morales Shaw

1 nay — Holland

1 absent — Slaton

**WITNESSES:** For — Tommy Calvert, Bexar County Precinct 4; Eric Samuels, Texas Homeless Network; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Marisa Finley, Baylor Scott & White Health; Alexa Aragonz, City of Arlington; Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; Guadalupe Cuellar, City of El Paso; Jamaal Smith, City of Houston, Office of the Mayor Sylvester Turner; Christine Wright, City of San Antonio; Madeline Kennedy, Thrive Youth Center; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

**BACKGROUND:** Government Code sec. 2306.902 establishes the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless as an advisory committee to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The council may recommend policies to the board. The board is required to provide written justification for not accepting council recommendations and must consider council recommendations in preparing its low income housing plan.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 3034 would require the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless to collaborate with a state agency designated by the council to establish a statewide homelessness data system.

The statewide homelessness data system would enable state agencies and local government entities, including law enforcement agencies, court systems, school districts, and emergency service providers, to share information related to individuals experiencing homelessness and access

information about those individuals to connect or refer them to services, including affordable housing opportunities.

**Data system development.** In developing the data system, the council and the designated state agency would be required to:

- consult with representatives of state agencies, local government entities, and other relevant entities to determine the challenges they faced in addressing homelessness and how best to improve responses to those challenges;
- enter into data sharing agreements as necessary for the exchange of information related to individuals experiencing homelessness through the data system; and
- ensure that information stored in the data system that was confidential under state and federal law was not disclosed.

The data sharing system would collect data, to the extent permitted by the data sharing agreement, from other homelessness data systems maintained and operated by a state agency, local law enforcement agency, or other state entity and collect, aggregate, analyze, and share homelessness information submitted to the data system with entities that had access to the system.

**Report.** The Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless or an entity designated by the council would be required to prepare and submit to the legislature and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs a written report that evaluated the effectiveness of the statewide homelessness data system in addressing homelessness in the state by September 1, 2023.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

CSHB 3034 would help people experiencing homelessness and their families by connecting affected individuals with services and helping track those individuals so that their families could locate them and hopefully reunite with them.

Many people become homeless due to adverse circumstances at their former place of residence that cause them to leave, including domestic violence, mental illness, or substance abuse. The creation of a homelessness data system would facilitate the tracking of these individuals, refer them to rehabilitative services, and connect them with affordable housing opportunities.

The committee substitute would eliminate certain privacy concerns by ensuring that personal identification information on people experiencing homelessness would remain confidential by removing public access to the data. The bill also would require that information that was confidential under state or federal law would not be disclosed.

CRITICS  
SAY:

CSHB 3034 would impose a financial burden on the state. The \$2.4 million fiscal note for the 2022-2023 biennium and additional state employees needed to maintain the system would be expensive and there would be no guarantee that the new statewide data system would have a significant impact on decreasing homelessness in Texas.

The collection of data on a person experiencing homelessness could violate their right to privacy. The bill does not specify what data points would be collected on people experiencing homelessness and how long individuals would remain in the data system after they found housing.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of about \$2.4 million to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2023. The bill would make no appropriation but could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement the bill's provisions.