

SUBJECT: Amending duties and composition of Specialty Courts Advisory Council

COMMITTEE: Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Leach, Julie Johnson, Davis, Flores, Moody, Murr, Schofield, Slawson, Vasut

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jennifer Balido, Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 772.0061(a)(2) establishes the following courts as “specialty courts” for the purposes of the Specialty Courts Advisory Council:

- commercially sexually exploited persons court programs;
- family drug court programs;
- drug court programs;
- veterans treatment court programs;
- mental health court programs; and
- public safety employees treatment court programs.

Sec. 772.0061(b)(2) establishes the Specialty Courts Advisory Council's role in recommending best practices for specialty courts to the governor's criminal justice division.

Sec. 772.0061(c) establishes the membership of the Specialty Courts Advisory Council as the following:

- one member with experience as the judge of a commercially sexually exploited persons court program;
- one member with experience as the judge of a family drug court

program;

- one member with experience as the judge of a drug court program;
- one member with experience as the judge of a veterans treatment court program; and
- five members who represent the public.

**DIGEST:** HB 2741 would amend Government Code sec. 772.0061(a)(2) to include a juvenile family drug court program in the list of specialty courts under the Specialty Courts Advisory Council.

The bill would amend Government Code sec. 772.0061(b)(2) to require that the Specialty Court Advisory Council's best practices recommendations be made to the Texas Judicial Council and Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System, in addition to the governor's criminal justice division.

Required membership of the Specialty Court Advisory Council would be amended to consist of four judges, each of whom must have experience as a judge in at least one specialty court, and five members representing the public.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 2741 would add a recently established specialty court to the Specialty Courts Advisory Council. Additionally, the bill would update the Specialty Courts Advisory Council's role by requiring them to provide recommendations to two new entities which have since assumed the function of the governor's criminal justice division. The bill also would grant more flexibility in appointing judges to the Specialty Court Advisory Council by increasing the pool of eligible judges and allowing for experience in additional areas.

**CRITICS SAY:** No concerns identified.