

SUBJECT: Amending the crime victim compensation's fund

COMMITTEE: Youth Health & Safety, Select — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Thompson, Hull, Allison, Capriglione, Dutton, A. Johnson, T. King, Landgraf, Lozano

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Georgia Bates, City of Uvalde; Jennifer Szimanski, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; M Paige Williams, Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot; Jenny Andrews, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Gabriella Fuentes, Texas Council on Family Violence; Nicole Golden, Texas Gun Sense; Laura Colangelo, Texas Private Schools Association; Idona Griffith; Cynthia Van Maanen; Louis Wichers)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Carly Blaine)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kristen Huff, Office of the Attorney General; Lindsey Sikes)

DIGEST: CSHB 2877 would make certain amendments to the definitions, requirements and funding mechanisms established within the crime victim compensation fund. The bill would amend the definition of “victim” for the purposes of the crime victim compensation fund to include children who were residents of the state and enrolled in a public or private primary or secondary school where criminally injurious conduct had occurred for which the governor issued a disaster declaration, but who were not present at the time of the conduct. The bill would limit compensation for these children to psychiatric care or counseling for the victim and, for an immediate family member or household member of the victim, the necessary expenses of traveling to and attending the funeral of another victim of the criminally injurious conduct.

The bill also would:

- remove a requirement that bereavement leave for immediate family members or household members of a deceased victim be limited to 10 work days;
- allow the attorney general to establish by rule a process to make an emergency award;
- repeal certain requirements related to receiving an emergency award, including the presumption that a final award was likely to be made;
- repeal a requirement that emergency awards be less than \$1,500;
- repeal certain limits on one-time assistance payments for victims of stalking, family violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or murder attempts as children; and
- remove the names of crime victims and claimants who receive compensation from information available to the public.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023, and would apply only to compensation for criminally injurious acts occurring on or after the effective date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2877 would ensure support for more crime victims who deserve compensatory payments. The bill would expand eligibility for the crime victims compensation fund to better help people who were previously excluded from coverage, including children who would be affected by certain shootings that occurred at schools and were declared disasters.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, CSHB 2877 would have a negative two-year impact of about \$4 million on the general revenue-dedicated account for compensation to victims of crime. Additional indeterminate costs would result from changes in eligibility requirement for certain enrolled students.