

SUBJECT: Allowing protective order applicants to participate remotely in hearings

COMMITTEE: Juvenile Justice & Family Issues — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Dutton, Lujan, Cook, J. Lopez, Martinez Fischer, Smithee, Talarico

0 nays

2 absent — Leo-Wilson, Wu

WITNESSES: For — Katherine Miracle, Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot; Ariana Chalajour, SMU Dedman Law Gender Violence Clinic; Krista Del Gallo, Texas Council on Family Violence; Aaron Setliff, The El Paso County Attorney’s Office (*Registered, but did not testify*: Clarice Cross, Asian Family Support Services of Austin; Nadia Islam, City of San Antonio; Jennifer Tharp, Comal County Criminal District Attorney's Office; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; Elisa M. Tamayo, El Paso County; Georgia Bates, Giffords; Jessica Anderson, Houston Police Department; Kent Birdsong, Oldham County Attorney; Natalie Nanasi, SMU Law, Hunter Legal Center for Victims of Crimes Against Women; Heather Bellino, Texas Advocacy Project; Briana Gordley, Texas Appleseed; Amy Bresnen, Texas Family Law Foundation; Dallas Reed, Texas Municipal Police Association; J. Staley Heatly)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that codifying the practice of allowing courts to conduct virtual protective order hearings could be helpful to victims who may be hesitant to proceed with a protective order request due to fear of facing their perpetrator.

DIGEST: HB 698 would require a court, upon written request, to provide a method by which an applicant or witness could give testimony or participate remotely in a protective order hearing. This provision also would apply to a hearing on modification of a protective order. Such requests would have

to be granted unless the court found good cause to deny the request to participate remotely.

NOTES:

According to estimates by the Legislative Budget Board, HB 698 would have a negative impact of \$672,000 on general revenue related funds through fiscal 2024-25.