

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 289
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Finance
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As Filed

DIGEST

Currently, Texas law allows an inmate to request and receive health services without any charge to the inmate. According to the comptroller's Texas Performance Review the cost of providing health care to the state's 132,000 inmates is significant, totalling over \$425 million annually. Texas inmates make an average of 28 visits each to prison physicians annually. The comptroller attributes this high rate to the lower levels of health of the prison population compared to the general population, the absence of any cost charged to the inmates, and to the boredom that many inmates experience. This bill would impose a copayment of \$3 for each health care visit.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 289 requires an inmate to make a copayment of \$3 for each health care visit.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 501B, Government Code, by adding Section 501.061, as follows:

Sec. 501.061. INMATE COPAYMENTS FOR CERTAIN HEALTH CARE VISITS. (a) Requires an inmate confined in the institutional division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (department) who initiates a visit to a health care provider to make a copayment to the department in the amount of \$3. Requires the inmate to make the copayment out of the inmate's trust fund. Requires 50 percent of each deposit to the fund to be applied toward the balance owed until the total amount owed is paid, if the balance in the fund is insufficient to cover the copayment.

(b) Prohibits the charging of a copayment under certain conditions.

(c) Prohibits the department from denying an inmate access to health care as a result of the inmate's failure or inability to make a copayment.

(d) Requires the department to deposit money received under this section in an account in the general revenue fund that may be used only to pay the cost of administering this section. Requires the comptroller, at the beginning of each year, to transfer any surplus from the preceding fiscal year to the credit of the compensation to victims of crime fund in the state treasury created under Chapter 56B, Code of Criminal Procedure.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 1997.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.