

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 2180
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Health & Human Services
5/18/2005
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

One particular area of need for state law enforcement is reliable data on decomposition of bodies. The closest facility conducting such research is located at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and the data produced is not necessarily reliable in the different climatic conditions and terrain of Texas. In addition, state law enforcement officials often do not have the budget to travel to out-of-state training seminars, and experts from the facility in Tennessee are usually not available to assist with investigations in Texas. A decomposition facility at a forensic science program in Texas would help resolve both problems, offering a training site to state law enforcement personnel and further developing a network of forensic anthropologists available to assist these investigators.

Founded in 1999, Baylor University's forensic science program has grown to roughly 500 students and is the only undergraduate program of its kind in Texas. Baylor's forensic science faculty assist law enforcement in various capacities, and graduates of the program provide excellent candidates for the state's medical schools, graduate schools, and law enforcement agencies.

Baylor's forensic science program proposes to establish a decomposition facility in which the rate of decay of bodies in different settings can be monitored to better inform crime scene investigation. However, current law only allows bodies or body parts to be donated to an entity that is on a statutory list. To develop a decomposition facility, Baylor must be designated as an eligible donee of bodies. This bill allows for that designation.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 692.005, Health and Safety Code, to add to the list of persons authorized to be donees of gifts of bodies or parts of bodies a forensic science program at a general academic teaching institution, as defined by Section 61.003(3) (Definitions), Education Code, or a private or independent institution of higher education, as defined by Section 61.003(15), Education Code. Redesignates Subdivision (6) as Subdivision (7). Provides an exception for donations to a forensic science program under Subsection (a)(6).

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2005.