

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
79R6507 MSE-F

S.B. 995
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Health & Human Services
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As Filed

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 such facility is located at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and the data produced is not necessarily reliable in the different climatic and terrain conditions 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 in Section 692.005, Health and Safety Code.

As proposed, S.B. 995 adds a forensic science program at a general academic teaching institution or a private or independent institution of higher education to the list of eligible donees of bodies or body parts.

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, as follows:

Sec. 692.005. PERSONS WHO MAY BECOME DONEES. (a) Adds certain forensic science programs to the list of persons authorized to be donees of gifts of bodies or parts of bodies.

(b) Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2005.