

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1120
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2018, the Task Force of Border Health Officials under the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) reported that due to the health care professional shortage, lack of understanding of the prevalence of infectious diseases, and lack of resources in border counties, local public health departments along the border region who are on the frontline identifying and treating infectious diseases like tuberculosis need additional assistance and training from the state.

For instance, the overall tuberculosis (TB) incidence in the Texas border region is 10.5 cases per 100,000 in population, which is double the Texas average of 5.5 cases per 100,000 in population. Additionally, border health officials report that local border clinics and hospitals are not well equipped with laboratory, clinical infrastructure, public health expertise, or public health knowledge to appropriately control TB. Although TB is more prevalent in the border region, unfortunately community members are unaware of common symptoms and the stigma for treatment continues to be a barrier for those who need treatment and seek care for a preventable and curable disease.

In order to address these problems, S.B. 1120 directs DSHS to undertake a continuing education initiative to address communicable and other diseases in the immediate border counties. The bill directs DSHS, in collaboration with appropriate entities, to provide continuing education designed to reduce the incidence of communicable and other diseases in border counties to community health workers, health professionals, and applicable employees of a local health department or public health districts.

The bill provides that the continuing education may address: the diagnosis and treatment of communicable and other diseases, methods for increasing pediatric and adult immunization rates, and strategies for improving health care system operations related to public health, including identifying, monitoring, tracking, and responding to communicable and other diseases occurring in border counties.

To increase the effectiveness of the training, S.B. 1120 directs DSHS to collaborate with state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, public and private hospitals, institutions of higher education, and private entities to identify, apply for, and solicit sources of funding for health professional continuing education.

As proposed, S.B. 1120 amends current law relating to health professional continuing education to address communicable and other diseases in border counties.

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 Chapter 81, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subchapter K, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION TO
ADDRESS COMMUNICABLE AND OTHER DISEASES IN BORDER COUNTIES

Sec. 81.451. DEFINITIONS. Defines "community health worker," "health professional," and "HIV" for purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 81.452. APPLICABILITY OF SUBCHAPTER. Establishes that this subchapter applies only to a county adjacent to the international border with Mexico.

Sec. 81.453. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION. (a) Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), to the extent funds are available, in collaboration with certain health entities, to provide to certain individuals continuing education designed to reduce the incidence of communicable or other diseases in counties described by Section 81.452.

(b) Authorizes the continuing education described by Subsection (a) to address:

(1) the diagnosis and treatment of certain communicable and other diseases;

(2) methods for increasing pediatric and adult immunization rates;

(3) strategies for improving health care system operations related to public health, including identifying, monitoring, tracking, and responding to communicable and other diseases occurring in the counties described by Section 81.452; and

(4) any other matter that DSHS determines assists certain health entities with addressing public health challenges existing in those counties.

Sec. 81.454. FUNDING. (a) Authorizes DSHS to solicit or accept gifts, grants, or donations to fund health professional continuing education under this subchapter.

(b) Requires DSHS to collaborate with state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, public and private hospitals, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to identify, apply for, and solicit sources of funding for health professional continuing education under this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2019.