

House Bills of Interest – Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services

Bill No	Sponsor	Description	Local Impact	Status Update
HB 144	Raymond	Regarding mental examinations of children in the juvenile justice system - adds "suffers from chemical dependency" to the definition of mental illness.	Will help children suffering from chemical dependency receive services; could avoid criminalizing these children. Will also increase demand for behavioral health services provided by local agencies and organizations.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 194	Farias, et al.	Adds veterans who have a service-connected disability to the definition of "economically disadvantaged person" for ownership purposes in determining whether a business is a historically underutilized business for purposes of state contracting.	May help mitigate some economic and social disadvantages veterans and their families face.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 595	Kolkhorst	Among others, the Interagency Coordinating Council for HIV and Hepatitis, the Texas HIV medication program, certain testing, registration and counseling programs are up for Sunset review.	TCHHS/VS invests in HIV services in the community. If these programs are abolished or transferred to the Department of State Health Services, there may be some loss or alteration in service that may negatively impact recipients, even if only during the transition. This could create a greater burden on the local public health infrastructure.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 633	Farias	Requires the DPS to include a voluntary contribution space on driver's license or personal identification certificate applications for the purposes of making a donation to the fund for veteran's assistance. Requires DPS to send contributions to the comptroller of public accounts by the 14 th of every month, deducting reasonable administrative expenses.	This was recently enacted for vehicle registration renewal online and, according to some groups, has generated a substantial amount for the fund. However, the money is still not enough to meet the needs being requested. The proposed new bill would offer an additional opportunity for individuals to donate to the fund, potentially funding more organizations requesting money.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 634	Farias	Requires the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to investigate and verify the veteran status of inmates and requires that inmates are provided assistance in applying for federal benefits or compensation they may be eligible for.	Ensures that inmates of TDCJ who are also eligible veterans receive federal benefits.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 654	Cortez	Repeals the term limit of no more than two consecutive two-year terms for tenant representatives who serve as a commissioner of a local housing authority.	May increase tenant representation in local housing authorities.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 736	Farias	Adds a member from the Texas Veterans Commission to the Housing and Health Services Coordination Council.	Gives veterans a voice on the Council.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor

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HB 748	Raymond	States that HHSC shall apply for and pursue a waiver to use certain federal funds to test innovation strategies in child welfare programs for the purposes of providing more permanency for children by reducing time in foster care; increasing positive outcomes, safety, and well-being of infants, children, and youth; and preventing child abuse, neglect and the reentry of children into foster care.	Finding innovative strategies in child welfare could promote successful transitions from foster youth into adulthood, reduce time in foster care, increase positive outcomes, safety and well-being in infants, children and youth, and could overall prevent child abuse and neglect.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 749	Raymond	Identical to SB 759. Mandates development and implementation of a 5 year plan to increase participation in the summer food service program for eligible children, including those in rural areas.	May result in more children served by this program, thereby decreasing some demand on organizations providing basic needs assistance to county residents. By feeding more children with state funding, some costs may be transferred from local agencies to the state.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 808	Zerwas	Gives psychologists the ability to delegate certain care to a person working under the psychologist's supervision (i.e. someone training to be a psychologist).	May offset some of the existing shortages of mental health care providers.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 843	Lucio III Gonzalez, Naomi	Adds a child in the conservatorship of the state to the list of persons entitled to at least 10 days' notice of a permanency hearing and entitled to present evidence and be heard at the hearing if the child is at least 10 years of age or older or if the court determines it is appropriate for the child to receive notice.	Gives the child a voice in a hearing that decides where the child will be permanently placed. Could increase the chances of a child being placed where he/she wants.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 978	Raymond	Removes the ability of a relative or other responsible person who has a proper interest in the patient's welfare from the list of acceptable modes of transportation for certain patients to a mental health facility. Somewhat similar to HB 369, which refers to a specific geographical location and which allows a relative to transfer the patient.	Transportation by trained personnel could be in the best interest of the patient in some circumstances, but is a much more costly option.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 1023	Burkett	Requires the establishment of a task force to investigate and make recommendations regarding mental health workforce shortages.	Findings and subsequent actions may provide sufficient numbers of mental health providers.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 1025	Pitts	Makes supplemental appropriations increases and reductions for various state agencies for FY 2013, including GR reductions of \$24 M in DFPS foster care payments and \$2M in TANF cash grants as well as reductions in federal funds for TANF of \$5.8M. Several reductions for higher	Will be harmful to foster families and TANF-eligible individuals. These cuts directly affect some of our most vulnerable populations.	Line item veto, signed by governor 6/14/13

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		education institutions are also included. Increases are slated for Veterans's Commission claims reduction in the amount of \$1.5M and \$39 M to TDCJ for correctional managed healthcare, among other agencies.		
HB 1191	Burkett	Mandates that the Texas Information and Referral Network provide referral information on where persons with mental illness can find housing on the internet.	If this resource does not currently exist for Travis County residents (2-1-1?), this could provide a single point of access for housing referrals for persons with mental illness, improving their chances of securing housing.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 1205	Parker	If a professional is required to make a report on suspected child abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to make a report, it is a Class A misdemeanor offense, unless the accused is shown to intentionally conceal the abuse or neglect, in which case it is a state jail felony.	Could improve outcomes for children suffering from abuse/neglect.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 1394	King, Susan	Mandates the Sunset Review of the Department of State Health Services to be completed no later than December 31, 2014.	If DSHS is Sunsetting, TCHHS/VS and community agencies will have to reorient to changes in the social services structure at the state level. Clients will be affected as well, as programs and services may be changed or altered as a result of the Sunsetting of the agency.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 2111	Strama	Adds nutrition education that promotes healthy food choices and services that will assist youth in developing skills in food preparation to the list of requirements a transitional living services for foster youth contract must assist the youth in obtaining.	Could result in better healthy food choices among foster youth and, subsequently, better health outcomes.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor
HB 2392	Menéndez	Requires the department to implement a mental health program for veterans as part of the list of human services programs required by the department.	Would mark an expansion of mental health services for veterans.	06/14/2013 Signed by Governor