

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1396
By: Dukes
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Office of Minority Health was created under the Texas Department of Health (department) with the purpose of providing a focus for the department on issues of particular importance to minority health. With the reorganization of the department into the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the Office of Minority Health was reorganized into the Office for the Elimination of Health Disparities with a broader focus to identify and work through existing programs to address health and health access disparities that that may occur among multicultural, disadvantaged, and regional populations. In addition, a Task Force for Elimination of Health Disparities was formed and administered by the Office.

Over the past several years, the Office has found that many of the programs that could affect health disparities exist in Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) agencies outside of DSHS. The 2006 Office of Health Disparities Task Force report to the 80th Legislature recommended moving this office, and the task force, to the level of the Office of the Executive Commissioner, HHSC, in order for the Office to better meet its mission.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

HB 1396 transfers the Office for the Elimination of Health Disparities (OEHD), formerly known as the Office of Minority Health, from DSHS to the executive commissioner of HHSC and establishes its powers. The bill requires the commissioner to maintain an office for the elimination of health disparities, and to assume a leadership role in working or contracting with certain state and federal entities to develop health initiatives to decrease or eliminate health and health access disparities among multicultural, disadvantaged, and regional populations, including appropriate language services.

The bill moves the health disparities task force from DSHS to HHSC, and sets forth its purpose and duties. HHSC would be required to provide the necessary staff and facilities to assist the task force in performing its duties. The task force must submit a biennial report to governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house on the progress of each health and human services agency.

Finally, the bill requires DSHS to transfer all its powers, duties, functions, obligations, liabilities, and assets to HHSC by January 1, 2008. The bill sets for definitions and makes conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.