

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2683
By: Chisum
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

House Bill 2683 allows the Health and Human Services Commission to provide grants of not more than \$50,000 for programs for low-income persons that support the development of healthy marriages or the strengthening of families. The bill requires that a minimum of one percent of federal funds received under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant are directed each biennium to fund such programs.

While promoting marriage through marriage courses and counseling has become a cornerstone of the federal discussion on promoting marriage, there is nothing that prevents states from funding such programs on its own. Texas should continue to lead the nation and fund these programs at the state level. TANF recipients should have the opportunity to add to the assistance they receive by completing healthy marriage classes that give them tools needed to succeed in marriage.

This reflects the fact that TANF clients often have challenges that other populations do not have, and it is possible that many of these clients have not had these appropriate behaviors modeled for them. The figures correlating poverty and marital status illustrate how the cycle of poverty may continue if a person has not had experience in a family held together by a strong marriage.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of the bill.

ANALYSIS

House Bill 2683 amends the Human Resources Code to authorize the Health and Human Services Commission to administer a grant program to provide grants not to exceed \$50,000 for programs that support the development of healthy marriages or strengthening of families. The bill authorizes the programs to use grant money to enlarge their capacity or pay for other program expenses. The bill authorizes the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission to adopt rules to implement the healthy marriages and strong families grant program.

The bill requires the Health and Human Services Commission, to the extent authorized by federal law, to spend a minimum of one percent of the money received under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant during the states fiscal biennium to fund programs for low-income persons that support healthy marriages and strengthen families such as the healthy marriage development program and the healthy marriage and strong families grant program.

H.B. 2683 provides that if a state agency determines that a wavier or authorization from a federal agency is necessary for implementation of the health marriages and strong families grant program, the agency is required to obtain a wavier or authorization and is authorized to delay implementation until the wavier or authorization is granted.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.

H.B. 2683 80(R)