

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 591
By: Nelson
Public Health
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita were natural disasters that required the ability to communicate with personnel, such as physicians, who could play key roles in mitigating some of the damage created. Current law does not provide for the Texas Medical Board (board) to contact physicians in case of such an emergency.

As proposed, C.S.S.B. 591 requires physicians to provide e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers as available to allow the board to contact its licensees in times of emergency. This bill also protects that contact information from disclosure and prohibits its use for any reason other than contacting the physician in a time of emergency.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 591 amends Subchapter A, Chapter 156, Occupations Code, by adding Section 156.006, as follows:

Sec. 156.006. EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION. (a) Requires each person licensed to practice medicine under Chapter 155, Occupations Code, (license holder) to submit to the Texas Medical Board (board) telephone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses (contact information), if available and as appropriate, for the board to use to contact the license holder in an emergency.

(b) Requires a license holder who receives an initial registration permit to provide contact information no later than the 30th day after that permit is issued. Requires each license holder who applies to renew a registration permit to submit contact information with the renewal application.

(c) Requires a license holder to report any change in the license holder's contact information not later than 45 days after the date of change.

(d) Provides that the contact information provided by the license holder is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552 (Public Information), Government Code. Prohibits the board from disclosing contact information of a license holder except as provided by subsection (e).

(e) Permits the board; in the event of a public health emergency declared or invoked by the governor, the Department of State Health Services, or a federal agency; to publish, release, or make available information provided by a license holder under this section for the sole purpose of disseminating information to a license holder; designated city, county, state, or federal public health or emergency management official; or the Federation of State Medical Boards.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires license holders to submit contact information to the board not later than December 1, 2007.

(b) Provides that the contact information provided by a license holder under this section is confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552 (Public Information), Government Code. Prohibits the board from disclosing the contact information of a license holder under this section, except as provided by subsection (e) and specifies that the board is to only use the information to contact a license holder in an emergency.

(c) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2008.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

The committee substitute differs from the original in that it adds language allowing the disclosure of a license holder's contact information only in the event of a public health emergency declared by the governor, the Department of State Health Services, or a federal agency. The agency may only release the information for the sole purpose of disseminating information to a license holder, a city, county, state, or federal public health emergency official, or the Federation of State Medical Boards.