

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1671
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Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

As the 2005 and 2008 hurricane seasons demonstrated, disasters make conducting everyday business difficult, if not impossible. One endeavor negatively affected by such an interruption, the newborn screening program, works to detect genetic disorders that may result in cognitive or physical disability or death, but that may be managed through proper medical care and nutrition. For some infants, the lack of early detection means the loss of precious time for identifying effective treatment and care practices and providing guidance to parents.

Texas could address this issue through mutual aid agreements or contracts with other states permitting reciprocal assistance with newborn screening in the event of a crisis in either state. However, Texas law currently prohibits contracts for the sale of newborn screening services, removing the incentive for other states to enter into a mutual agreement.

H.B. 1671 authorizes the Department of State Health Services to make secure arrangements with other states for the continuity of newborn screening services in the event a disaster affects the state laboratory. The bill also authorizes the department to assist other states, ensuring that their newborn screening programs do not suffer extensive interruptions during a disaster.

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

H.B. 1671 amends the Health and Safety Code to authorize the Department of State Health Services to enter into a mutual aid agreement to provide newborn screening laboratory services to another state and to receive newborn screening laboratory services from another state in the event of an unexpected interruption of service, including an interruption caused by a disaster. The bill requires each agreement to include provisions addressing the confidentiality of the identity of the newborn child and the newborn child's family and ensuring the return of blood specimens and related records to the state that received the newborn screening laboratory services. The bill defines "newborn screening laboratory services" as the performance of tests to analyze specimens collected as part of a newborn screening performed for phenylketonuria, other heritable diseases, hypothyroidism, and certain other disorders.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.