

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 343
By: Nelson
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Many Texans live in areas that are underserved by retail food stores that offer fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables. Poor nutrition is a major contributor to obesity and Texas is currently ranked 15th nationally in terms of obesity. Obesity-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease are exacerbated by poor eating habits.

S.B. 343 requires the creation of an advisory committee to study and provide recommendations to the legislature regarding the areas of Texas that are underserved in the retail availability of healthy foods and the impact of the limited availability on nutrition, obesity, and chronic illnesses.

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

S.B. 343 adds temporary provisions, set to expire September 1, 2011, relating to the creation of an advisory committee to study the retail availability of healthy foods in certain underserved areas of Texas. The bill requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture (TDA) to jointly establish an advisory committee to study and provide recommendations to the legislature regarding the areas of Texas that are underserved in the retail availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods and the impact of the limited retail availability on proper nutrition and on obesity and related chronic illnesses.

S.B. 343 requires the advisory committee to investigate the retail availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods in Texas; to develop recommendations for creating and a plan for implementing a statewide financing program to bring fresh food retailers into areas of Texas that are underserved in regard to the retail availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods; and to perform other advisory duties as requested by the executive commissioner of HHSC or the commissioner of TDA regarding the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods in Texas.

S.B. 343 requires the advisory committee, not later than September 1, 2010, to submit to the legislature a report outlining the costs, benefits, and feasibility of a statewide financing program to bring fresh food retailers into areas of Texas that are underserved in regard to the retail availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods; and a plan for implementing the program. The bill specifies the composition of the advisory committee, the prohibition against an advisory committee member receiving reimbursement of expenses or compensation, and requirements for regularly scheduling meetings and for selecting a presiding officer. The bill provides that provisions governing state agency advisory committees do not apply to the advisory committee established under these provisions. The bill provides that the advisory

committee is abolished September 1, 2011.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.