

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 871
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Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Obesity-related costs in Texas are soaring, but only five percent of health care costs are used for obesity prevention. Costs associated with state employees in Texas have increased 53 percent since 2000. Unless Texas invests in effective interventions to address preventable health problems now, related costs will have a significant impact on the state budget for decades to come.

Through the implementation of policies to improve nutrition, activity, and overall health, worksite wellness programs aim to reduce health-related expenses for employees and employers, in addition to reducing employee absences. The 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, created a worksite wellness program for state employees.

S.B. 871 requires the statewide wellness coordinator to create an online questionnaire for state agency heads to report information and requires each state agency with more than 50 employees to create and annually update a worksite wellness policy. The bill amends current law relating to state agency wellness policies, including health risk assessments of state employees.

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. 871 amends the Government Code to require the statewide wellness coordinator to create an online questionnaire for state agency heads to report information, including the agency policy on leave time for employees to complete a health risk assessment, the agency policy on leave time for employees to receive an annual physical examination, the agency policy on providing employees time during the workday to exercise, and whether the agency has a wellness coordinator or council.

S.B. 871 requires each state agency with more than 50 employees to create and annually update a worksite wellness policy. The bill requires the executive head of a state agency to submit the agency's worksite wellness information to the statewide wellness coordinator annually through the online questionnaire. The bill authorizes a state agency to provide four hours of additional leave time each year to an employee who receives a physical examination, rather than 8 hours of additional leave time to an employee who receives a physical examination and who completes a health risk assessment. The bill requires a state agency to provide four hours of leave time each year to an employee who completes either an online health risk assessment tool provided by the Worksite Wellness Advisory Board or a similar health risk assessment conducted in person by a worksite wellness coordinator, except that a state agency is not required to provide such hours to an employee who is a correctional officer and is performing critical duties for the agency as determined by the agency. The bill authorizes an institution of higher education to provide four hours of leave time each year to an employee who completes either an online health risk

assessment tool provided by the board or a similar health risk assessment conducted in person by a worksite wellness coordinator.

S.B. 871 amends the Insurance Code to require the board of trustees that administers the Employees Retirement System of Texas to submit a written report not later than January 1 of each year to the governor and Legislative Budget Board that includes a population-based summary of the health risk assessments completed during the preceding state fiscal year and an evaluation of the Employees Retirement System of Texas' weight management programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.