

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1878
By: Nelson
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Federal and state housing services programs operate independently, resulting in different eligibility requirements, funding mechanisms, and regulations. No single entity exists to coordinate and reduce barriers created as a result of the number of entities involved in developing service-enriched housing.

S.B. 1878 creates a housing and health services council within the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs responsible for increasing state efforts to offer service-enriched housing through increased coordination of housing and health services.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 1878 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to establish a housing and health services coordination council. The bill defines "council," establishes that it is to be composed of 16 members, and provides for its specific membership, organization, members' terms of service, operation, staffing, and compensation and reimbursement. The bill requires a member of the council appointed from specified agencies, subject to the approval of the head of the agency, to have the authority to make decisions for and to commit resources of the agency that the member represents. The bill requires a member to have administrative responsibility for agency programs for older adults or persons with disabilities, knowledge or experience regarding the implementation of projects that integrate housing and health services, or knowledge or experience regarding services used by older adults or persons with disabilities.

S.B. 1878 requires the council to develop and implement policies to coordinate and increase state efforts to offer service-enriched housing; to identify barriers preventing or slowing service-enriched housing efforts, including barriers attributable to the regulatory requirements and limitations, administrative limitations, limitations on funding, and ineffective or limited coordination; to develop a system to cross-educate selected staff in state housing and health services agencies to increase the number of staff with expertise in both areas and to coordinate relevant staff activities of those agencies; to identify opportunities for state housing and health services agencies to provide technical assistance and training to local housing and health services entities about the cross-education of staff, coordination among those entities, and opportunities to increase local efforts to create service-enriched housing; and to develop suggested performance measures to track progress in the reduction or elimination of barriers in creating service-enriched housing, increasing the coordination between state housing and health services agencies, increasing the number of cross-educated or expert state housing and health services staff, and the provision of technical assistance to local communities by state housing and health services staff to increase the number of service-enriched housing projects. The bill requires the council to develop a biennial plan to implement the service-enriched housing goals and to

deliver, not later than August 1 of each even-numbered year, a report of the council's findings and recommendations to the governor and the Legislative Budget Board. The bill requires the department by rule, with the advice and assistance of the council, to define "service-enriched housing."

S.B. 1878 authorizes the council to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations for the council and establishes the duties of department employees assigned to provide advisory support to the council with respect to sources of funding, financial models and information, communication between agencies, funding sources, and service providers, training, database development, biennial evaluations, recommendations for changes to applicable Medicaid waivers, best practices, and an information clearinghouse.

S.B. 1878 requires the governor and the heads of the applicable state agencies, as soon as possible after the effective date of the bill, to appoint members to the housing and health services coordination council. The bill requires the governor, in making initial appointments to the housing and health services coordination council, to appoint two members to serve a term expiring September 1, 2011, three members to serve a term expiring September 1, 2013, and three members to serve a term expiring September 1, 2015. The bill requires the council to submit its first report of findings and recommendations not later than September 1, 2010.

S.B. 1878 provides that the bill does not make an appropriation and that a provision in the bill that creates a new governmental program, creates a new entitlement, or imposes a new duty on a governmental entity is not mandatory during a fiscal period for which the legislature has not made a specific appropriation to implement the provision.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.