

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2068
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Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Recent economic and demographic shifts point to an increased need for social work services in many practice areas such as gerontology, employment training, child welfare, criminal and juvenile justice, health care, military and veterans affairs, substance abuse, and mental health. Recent reports from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics have suggested that employment of social workers will increase within the next 10 years at a higher rate than the average for most other occupations. Social workers have traditionally been challenged by work-related issues such as fair compensation and benefits, safety and workplace conditions, and employee turnover, supervision, and training. Because of this, interested parties note that there is a need for careful planning based on accurate and timely data by policymakers to ensure that the various community needs are being adequately addressed.

H.B. 2068 seeks to address this issue by, among other provisions, requiring the statewide health coordinating council, to the extent funding is available through increased license renewal fees, to establish a social work resource section within the health professions resource center for the collection and analysis of certain data regarding social workers in Texas.

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. 2068 amends the Health and Safety Code to require the statewide health coordinating council, to the extent funding is available through license renewal fees increased by the bill's provisions, to establish a social work resource section within the health professions resource center for the collection and analysis of educational and employment trends for social workers in Texas. The bill requires the council, if the social work resource section is funded from increased fee surcharges, to provide the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners with an annual accounting of the money received from the board. The bill authorizes the council to expend a reasonable amount of the money to pay administrative costs of maintaining the social work resource section.

H.B. 2068 requires the council, to the extent feasible, to use a researcher with a degree from a master's social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and a doctorate in social work to collect, analyze, and disseminate social work data that may be used to predict supply and demand for social work personnel in Texas using appropriate federal or state supply-and-demand models. The bill includes data concerning social workers and data concerning the health professions in which shortages occur in areas near the international border among the high-priority data on health professions demonstrating an acute shortage in Texas required to be collected and disseminated by the council.

H.B. 2068 adds a description of the person's language fluency to the list of fields required to be

added to an application or renewal form for a license, certificate, or registration for certain health professionals by the Department of Information Resources. The bill makes data received by the social work resource center that contains identifying information confidential and not subject to disclosure under the state open records law and prohibits such information from being released until all identifying information is removed from the data. The bill includes certain data collected and analyzed by the council relating to social work professionals among the data on which the council is required to publish reports. The bill makes a conforming change.

H.B. 2068 amends the Occupations Code to increase the amount of the fee to renew a social worker license by \$10. The bill authorizes the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners to use six cents from the amount of the surcharge to cover the administrative costs of collecting and depositing the surcharge. The bill requires the board to quarterly transmit the remainder of each surcharge to the Department of State Health Services to be used only to fund a social work resource section and provides that the board is not required to collect the surcharge if the board determines that the money collected is not appropriated for that purpose.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2011.