

By: Lucio

S.B. No. 825

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to the provision of affordable housing in rural
3 communities and small municipalities.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Subchapter E, Chapter 2306, Government Code, is
6 amended by adding Section 2306.098 to read as follows:

7 Sec. 2306.098. RURAL HOUSING FIELD OFFICES. (a) The board
8 by rule shall:

9 (1) establish field offices in rural areas of each
10 uniform state service region to assist political subdivisions and
11 nonprofit entities in developing or administering affordable
12 housing programs in those areas; and

13 (2) specify the duties for each field office.

14 (b) The rules under Subsection (a) must include the
15 following duties for each field office:

16 (1) identifying affordable housing needs for rural
17 areas of the uniform state service region in which the field office
18 is located;

19 (2) identifying state and federal programs that may
20 address the needs identified under Subdivision (1);

21 (3) facilitating the development of relationships
22 that will assist in building local capacity to address the needs
23 identified under Subdivision (1); and

24 (4) providing information regarding state programs to

1 assist in the development of affordable housing for rural areas of
2 the uniform state service region in which the field office is
3 located.

4 SECTION 2. Chapter 2306, Government Code, is amended by
5 adding Subchapter N to read as follows:

6 SUBCHAPTER N. OFFICE OF RURAL COMMUNITY AND SMALL MUNICIPALITY
7 HOUSING INITIATIVES

8 Sec. 2306.301. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "office"
9 means the office established by Section 2306.302 to support rural
10 community and small municipality housing initiatives.

11 Sec. 2306.302. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE. (a) The
12 department shall establish an office to support rural community and
13 small municipality housing initiatives.

14 (b) The department by rule shall define for purposes of this
15 subchapter:

16 (1) a rural community; and

17 (2) a small municipality.

18 (c) Subject to available funding, the department by rule may
19 establish not more than seven field offices as part of the office.

20 (d) The office shall work with each regional council of
21 government to:

22 (1) match housing sponsors to the housing needs of
23 rural communities and small municipalities; and

24 (2) identify available sources of funds for those
25 housing needs.

26 (e) The office shall use funds available from the housing
27 trust fund established under Section 2306.201 to administer

1 capacity building programs for rural communities and small
2 municipalities.

3 (f) The office shall coordinate a meeting at least two times
4 each year between department program directors and representatives
5 of rural communities and small municipalities to discuss best
6 practices for rural community and small municipality housing
7 initiatives.

8 (g) The office shall establish an online clearinghouse of
9 information relating to best practices for rural community and
10 small municipality housing initiatives.

11 (h) The director may assign additional duties to the office.

12 Sec. 2306.303. REGIONAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS.

13 (a) The office shall establish regional nonprofit housing
14 development organizations that serve rural communities and small
15 municipalities in accordance with the purposes of this subchapter.

16 (b) To implement this section, the department may use any
17 money available to the department for the purpose, including gifts,
18 grants, and donations and funds allocated to the state under the
19 federal HOME Investment Partnerships program established under
20 Title II of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act
21 (42 U.S.C. Section 12701 et seq.).

22 Sec. 2306.304. TRAINING. (a) The office annually shall
23 provide to elected officials, community organizations, nonprofit
24 organizations, and private developers a training course that
25 addresses housing programs and techniques that increase housing
26 opportunities in rural communities and small municipalities. The
27 office shall provide the course at an appropriate location selected

1 by the office and shall make the course available online in real
2 time.

3 (b) The department periodically shall also provide to
4 elected officials a training course regarding housing programs and
5 sources of funding for these programs.

6 Sec. 2306.305. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLANNING ASSISTANCE. On
7 the request of the governing body of a municipality or county, the
8 office shall assign an employee or independent contractor to assist
9 the municipality or county in:

10 (1) developing comprehensive housing plans for rural
11 communities and small municipalities in that county;

12 (2) supporting housing development initiatives in
13 those communities and municipalities; and

14 (3) identifying financial resources available for
15 those plans and initiatives.

16 Sec. 2306.306. RURAL COMMUNITY AND SMALL MUNICIPALITY
17 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROJECTS. Notwithstanding other program
18 rules and procedures of the department, the department may
19 establish pilot projects to test and develop new approaches to
20 providing housing in rural communities and small municipalities
21 for:

22 (1) individuals and families of low income; and

23 (2) individuals and families of very low income.

24 Sec. 2306.307. AGRICULTURAL WORKER HOUSING INITIATIVE.

25 (a) The office shall fund housing initiatives that serve
26 agricultural workers and their families, including:

27 (1) new housing initiatives;

1 (2) housing rehabilitation initiatives; or

2 (3) tenant-based rental assistance.

3 (b) The office may designate as a pilot project a housing
4 initiative implemented under this section for agricultural workers
5 and their families.

6 (c) The office shall coordinate with appropriate divisions
7 of the department to:

8 (1) document agricultural worker housing needs;

9 (2) determine whether a housing need documented by the
10 department is critical; and

11 (3) develop initiatives to address those housing
12 needs.

13 (d) The department may use any available funds to implement
14 this section, including gifts, grants, and donations and funds
15 allocated to the department under the federal HOME Investment
16 Partnerships program established under Title II of the
17 Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C.
18 Section 12701 et seq.).

19 (e) In this section, "agricultural worker":

20 (1) means a person who receives a substantial portion
21 of income from employment that involves:

22 (A) the primary production of agricultural or
23 aquacultural commodities; or

24 (B) the handling of agricultural or aquacultural
25 commodities in an unprocessed state, including handling those
26 commodities in a feedlot or a meat processing plant; and

27 (2) includes a person who is retired or disabled but

1 was employed as described by Subdivision (1) at the time of that
2 person's retirement or disablement.

3 SECTION 3. Not later than October 1, 2011, the Texas
4 Department of Housing and Community Affairs shall adopt the rules
5 required by Subchapter N, Chapter 2306, Government Code, as added
6 by this Act.

7 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2011.