

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 591  
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Human Services  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **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 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. Interested parties note that social workers in the past have often been challenged by work-related issues such as fair compensation and benefits, safety and workplace conditions, and employee turnover, supervision, and training. These parties therefore see a need for careful planning based on accurate and timely data to inform policy makers as necessary to help them ensure that the various community needs are being adequately addressed. C.S.H.B. 591 seeks to address this issue by providing 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**

C.S.H.B. 591 amends the Health and Safety Code to require the statewide health coordinating council, to the extent funding is available through a surcharge collected by the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners for renewal of a social worker's license, 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 coordinating council, if a social work resource section is funded from such surcharges, to provide the board with an annual accounting of money received from the board and authorizes the coordinating council to expend a reasonable amount of money to pay administrative costs of maintaining the social work resource section.

C.S.H.B. 591 includes data concerning social workers and data concerning health professions in which shortages occur in areas near the international border among the data on which the coordinating council is required to place a high priority for collection and dissemination. The bill requires the Department of Information Resources, through the state electronic Internet portal and in consultation with the coordinating council and the Health Professions Council, to add a description of a person's language fluency to the required fields on an application or renewal form for a license, certificate, or registration for certain health professionals. The bill requires the coordinating 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 specifies that data received by the social work resource section that contains information identifying specific patients or health care facilities is confidential, is not

subject to disclosure under state public information law, and may not be released unless all identifying information is removed. The bill includes data collected and analyzed by the coordinating council relating to educational and employment trends and the supply and demand of social work professionals and such data relating to other issues relating to social work professionals deemed necessary by the coordinating council among the data on which the coordinating council is required to publish reports.

C.S.H.B. 591 amends the Occupations Code to increase the amount of the fee to renew a social worker license by \$10 and to authorize 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 the social work resource section and exempts the board from collecting the surcharge if it is determined that the money collected is not appropriated to fund the social work resource section.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2013.

**COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 591 differs from the original only by amending the caption.