

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2398
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Corrections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that, because hundreds of thousands of Texans have a loved one who is incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the visitation policies and practices at TDCJ facilities have an impact on many Texans and directly affect the ability of families to stay connected during incarceration. Under current law, TDCJ's state jail division and institutional division are required to have a visitation policy in their facilities, but interested parties assert that current requirements do not provide adequate standards for a visitation policy. These parties contend that it is critical that visitation policies provide safe contact between adults, child-friendly areas, atmospheres conducive to maintaining family relationships, and updated visitation facilities that reduce noise and allow for adequate space. H.B. 2398 seeks to address these concerns by requiring a study of current TDCJ visitation policies to provide the legislature with needed information on how to improve the policies to meet these critical needs.

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. 2398 amends the Government Code to add temporary provisions, set to expire February 1, 2015, to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to conduct a study of the visitation policies of the state jail division and the institutional division. The bill requires the study to include methods to improve the policies to provide safe contact between adults, child-friendly areas, an atmosphere that is conducive to maintaining family relations, and updated visitation facilities that reduce noise and allow for adequate space. The bill requires TDCJ, not later than December 31, 2014, to report the results of the study to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over TDCJ.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.