

By: Turner of Harris

H.B. No. 2399

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a study of the feasibility and desirability of certain changes to the juvenile justice system.

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

SECTION 1. (a) The executive director of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department shall create a committee composed of employees of the department to conduct a study on the feasibility and desirability of certain changes to the juvenile justice system to better provide effective services to youth.

(b) The study shall address and analyze the ability of the department to:

(1) use a regionalized system of smaller facilities to place children in a location as close as possible to their families;

(2) create diversified treatment and placement options;

(3) improve existing mechanisms in place to prevent or limit youth from being sent to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(4) collect and report the necessary data to support performance-based standards focused on outcome measures for the juvenile justice system;

(5) provide services to youth who are 17 years of age or older if the law or the age of criminal responsibility were changed;

1           (6) adequately serve and place youth with special  
2 needs, including youth with severe mental illness and youth with  
3 physical or educational disabilities;

4           (7) provide all youth in secure placement with  
5 sufficient and effective oversight by the independent ombudsman;  
6 and

7           (8) establish funding priorities for services that  
8 support the mission of the department and do not provide incentives  
9 to incarcerate youth.

10          (c) The executive director shall appoint the members of the  
11 committee under this section not later than December 1, 2013.

12          (d) Not later than August 1, 2015, the committee established  
13 under this section shall submit to the Sunset Advisory Commission  
14 and to the legislature a report on the study required under this  
15 section. The committee shall include in the report any legislative  
16 recommendations based on the study.

17          (e) The department must make the report created by the  
18 committee under this section available to the public on the  
19 department's Internet website.

20          (f) The committee is abolished and this Act expires  
21 September 1, 2015.

22          SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
23 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
24 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
25 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
26 Act takes effect September 1, 2013.