

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 1928

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Veteran Affairs & Military Installations-S/C Border Security

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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) offers refugee resettlement services to help refugee families attain economic independence and cultural adjustment after their arrival in the United States. Refugees are individuals who live outside their country of origin and cannot return to their home due to fear of persecution based on race, religion, ethnic group, or membership in a social or political group.

The resettlement of refugees in the local communities is coordinated by local voluntary resettlement agencies (VOLAGs). These entities work with national VOLAGs, the United States Department of State, and HHSC to determine the best place for these refugees to be resettled. A well-organized, systematic plan of engagement between local VOLAGs and stakeholders (i.e., school districts, local hospital districts, law enforcement, major employers, etc.) is vital to the assurance of available resources within communities in which these refugees are placed.

S.B. 1928 gives rulemaking authority to HHSC in order to allow public participation and local input into the rules developed around the placement of refugees. (Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 1928 amends current law relating to the rulemaking authority of the Health and Human Services Commission to provide for the placement of refugees in this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 531.041, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 531.041, Government Code, as follows:

Sec. 531.041. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Provides that the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has all the powers and duties necessary to administer this chapter.

(b) Requires the executive commissioner of HHSC (executive commissioner) to adopt rules for gathering and considering community input on the local refugee placement reporting requirements for the United States Refugee Resettlement Program.

(1) Requires that the rules, at a minimum, require the local volunteer agencies to take the following actions:

(a) convene and conduct quarterly refugee placement consultations with state and local government and community stakeholders regarding proposed refugee placement;

(b) obtain feedback on the proposed refugee placement from community stakeholders including but not limited to city, county

and state officials; local health care systems; local school districts; and local law enforcement agencies; and major employers of refugees;

(c) consider all feedback obtained prior to releasing the annual proposed refugee placement report for the US Department of State's Reception and Placement (R&P) program;

(d) develop a final refugee placement report for the national voluntary agencies and HHSC and include a summary of how stakeholder input contributed to the final request.

(e) inform all community stakeholders, as described in Subsection (b), of the annual proposed refugee placement report; and

SECTION 2. Requires the executive commissioner to adopt the rules as provided by Section 531.041(b), Government Code, as added by this Act, not later than May 1, 2016.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.