

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 630
By: Howard
Government Transparency & Operation
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised that the inadequacy of online access to open meetings of the Health and Human Services Commission and other health and human services agencies prejudice those unable to attend the meetings in person. H.B. 630 seeks to improve transparency and increase public engagement by providing for online broadcasts of health and human services agency open meetings.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 630 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and each health and human services agency to broadcast over the Internet live video and audio of each open meeting of such entity, to make a video and audio recording of reasonable quality of the broadcast, and to provide access to the archived video and audio on the applicable entity's website. The bill authorizes each such entity to use a room made available to the entity on request in any state building for the Internet broadcast. The bill requires such an entity to make available through its website archived video and audio of the open meeting not later than the seventh day after the date such an open meeting is broadcast and to maintain the archived video and audio of the open meeting on its website for not less than two years after the date the archived video and audio was first made available on the website. The bill requires each such entity to provide on its website the same notice of the open meeting that the entity is required to post under state law and requires such notice to be posted on the entity's website within the time required for posting such notice.

H.B. 630 exempts each such entity from the bill's requirements to the extent a catastrophe or a technical breakdown prevents the entity from compliance but requires the entity, following the catastrophe or technical breakdown, to make all reasonable efforts to make the required video and audio of the open meeting available in a timely manner. The bill requires HHSC to consider contracting through competitive bidding with a private individual or entity to broadcast and archive an open meeting to minimize the cost of compliance. The bill makes its requirements applicable to the meetings of any advisory body that advises the executive commissioner or such an entity, requires the archived video and audio of an advisory body's meeting to be made available through the website of the entity to which the advisory body provides advice, and requires HHSC to ensure that advisory committee meetings comply with the bill's provisions.

H.B. 630 applies only to an open meeting held on or after September 1, 2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2017.