

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 784
By: Guerra
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In their 2018 Biennial Report, The Task Force of Border Health Officials identified the lack of sufficient access to scientific laboratory capabilities to address the needs of Rio Grande Valley residents, and recommended a collaboration between the Department of State Health Services and a local institution of higher education in order to address this lack of resources. It has been noted that institutions of higher education located in the border region have laboratory capabilities that are equipped to conduct testing instead of having to package and transport specimens to a state lab several hundred miles away. Utilizing higher education institutions with mechanisms ensuring confidentiality would allow for the provision of testing assessments equal to the state in quality, ensure efficiency and accuracy in laboratory results, and enhance the local capacity for human and non-human samples.

HB 784 seeks to address the lack of laboratory capabilities available to border public health departments by allowing a collaboration between the Department of State Health Services to enter into an agreement with a local institution of higher education to increase the availability of laboratory resources in the Rio Grande Valley.

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

HB 784 amends the Health and Safety Code by requiring the Department of State Health Services to enter into an agreement with an institution of higher education, as defined by the Higher Education Coordinating Act of 1965, located in Cameron or Hidalgo County to increase the availability of laboratory services in counties adjacent to this state's international border with Mexico.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.