

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 1301
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Local Government
5/19/2021
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Persons and families living in colonias face some of the most difficult challenges in Texas, and although colonia self-help centers have been incredibly helpful in assisting colonia residents with home and property issues, there are concerns that these residents lack adequate resources and education to help them develop professional skills and achieve financial literacy.

H.B. 1301 would amend the Government Code to expand the purpose of a colonia self-help center to include assistance to persons and families of low income and very low income to improve living conditions in an applicable area and to include the provision of services to assist colonia residents in developing professional skills and achieving financial literacy.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Purpose)

C.S.H.B. 1301 amends current law relating to services provided by colonia self-help centers and a study on colonias in this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Sections 2306.586(a), (b), (c), and (d), Government Code, as follows:

(a) Provides that the purpose of a self-help center is to assist individuals and families of low income and very low income to finance, refinance, construct, improve, or maintain a safe, suitable home and otherwise improve living conditions in the colonias' designated service area or in another area the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has determined is suitable.

(b) Requires a self-help center to set a goal to improve the living conditions of residents in the colonias designated under Section 2306.583(b) (relating to requiring TDHCA, in consultation with the colonia resident advisory committee and the appropriate self-help center, to designate five colonias in each service area to receive concentrated attention from that center), rather than 2306.583(a)(2), within a two-year period after a contract is awarded under Subchapter Z (Colonias).

(c) Authorizes a self-help center to serve individuals and families of low income and very low income by:

(1) - (8) makes no changes to these subdivisions;

(9) providing other services that the self-help center, with the approval of TDHCA, determines are necessary to assist colonia residents in improving their living conditions, rather than in improving their physical living conditions, including help in:

(A) obtaining suitable alternative housing outside of a colonia's area; and

(B) performing the following authorized public service activities under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. Section 5301 et seq.):

(i) securing employment;

(ii) establishing or expanding a small business;

(iii) developing professional skills; or

(iv) managing personal finances and achieving financial literacy;

(10) and (11) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

(d) Prohibits a self-help center from providing grants, financing, or mortgage loan services to purchase, build, rehabilitate, or finance construction or improvements to a home or otherwise improve living conditions in a colonia if water service and suitable wastewater disposal are not available.

SECTION 2. (a) Defines "colonia" for this section.

(b) Provides that a joint interim committee is established to study colonias and colonia initiatives in this state.

(c) Provides that the joint interim committee is composed of the members of the standing committees of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over colonias and colonia issues. Requires the committee members to select a presiding officer from among the membership.

(d) Requires the joint interim committee, in conducting the study under this section, to:

(1) determine the best methods for updating and maintaining colonia identification systems and for identifying and classifying colonias in which the highest public health risks exist;

(2) consider whether colonias should be defined uniformly across all relevant state agencies and whether that definition should include certain essential metrics;

(3) address the enduring lack of services and infrastructure in colonias, assess best practices and funding needs for surveying the services and infrastructure available in, and demographics of, each colonia;

(4) assess the status of state agency tracking and reporting of state-funded colonia projects and whether improvements to the tracking or reporting mechanisms are necessary;

(5) determine and assess any non-infrastructure needs within colonias and options for this state to address those needs; and

(6) assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on colonias and whether additional state services are necessary to address those impacts.

(e) Provides that the joint interim committee has all other powers and duties provided to a special or select committee by the rules of the Texas Senate (senate) and Texas House of Representatives (house), by Subchapter B, Chapter 301, Government Code, and by policies of the senate and house committees on administration.

(f) Requires the joint interim committee, not later than September 1, 2022, to prepare and submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, and the legislature a written report that includes the findings of the committee under this section, including any legislative recommendations.

(g) Provides that the joint interim committee established under this section is abolished and this section expires November 1, 2022.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2021.