

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1917  
By: Lucio  
Human Services  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee has reported that stigma and a fear of losing independence may deter aging adults with visual impairment from seeking out services that could help them. The committee also observed that Texas lacks a statewide informational campaign and website for these adults and their families to obtain information about available programs and resources. This gap in information and awareness extends to professionals and community stakeholders who may be referral sources as well. In order to address the committee's findings, S.B. 1917 provides for the establishment of public awareness and education outreach campaigns designed to provide information relating to the programs and resources available to aging adults who are blind or visually impaired in Texas.

### **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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1917 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), in collaboration with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and other appropriate state agencies, to conduct public awareness and education outreach campaigns designed to provide information relating to the programs and resources available to aging adults who are blind or visually impaired in Texas. The bill requires the campaigns to be tailored to specific targeted populations and disseminated through methods appropriate for each targeted population.

S.B. 1917 requires HHSC to support the campaigns by taking the following actions:

- establishing a toll-free telephone number for providing counseling and referrals to appropriate services for aging adults who are blind or visually impaired;
- posting on the HHSC website information and training resources for aging adults, community stakeholders, and health care and other service providers that generally serve aging adults;
- designating a contact in HHSC to assist aging adults who are diagnosed with a visual impairment and are losing vision and the families of those adults with locating and obtaining appropriate services; and
- encouraging awareness of the reading services for persons who are blind or visually impaired that are offered by TSLAC.

The bill authorizes the executive commissioner of HHSC to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2021.