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By:  Ortega H.B. No. 2400

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to public health laboratory testing capabilities in certain counties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Subchapter F, Chapter 12, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Sections 12.0725, 12.073, and 12.074 to read as follows:

Sec. 12.0725.  PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY REPORT. (a) Not later than September 1, 2022, the department shall prepare and submit a written or electronic report to the legislature on public laboratories in counties on or near the Texas-Mexico border. The report must include:

(1)  information on the existing testing capabilities of the public laboratories, focusing on clinical, environmental, and zoonotic testing capabilities; and

(2)  recommendations to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of the public laboratories through administrative action and legislation.

(b)  The department shall collaborate with local health departments established under Subchapter D, Chapter 121, and public and private testing laboratories to collect information and develop recommendations for the report.

(c)  This section expires September 1, 2023.

Sec. 12.073.  LOCAL AGREEMENTS TO INCREASE LABORATORY TESTING. (a) Using available resources and as the department determines appropriate, the department shall enter into agreements with institutions of higher education as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, and public and private testing laboratories in this state to increase the availability of public health laboratory testing services for local health departments established under Subchapter D, Chapter 121, in counties on or near the Texas-Mexico border.

(b)  The agreements must establish protocols that:

(1)  ensure confidentiality of the laboratory testing;

(2)  require the testing procedures to satisfy state standards for laboratory testing;

(3)  provide cost-effective resources to local health departments to increase the availability of laboratory testing in border counties;

(4)  enhance the laboratory testing capacity, including testing of human and nonhuman specimens, in border counties; and

(5)  ensure the efficiency, effectiveness, and accuracy of laboratory test results.

Sec. 12.074.  YEAR-ROUND ACCESS TO LABORATORY TESTING FOR VECTOR-BORNE AND ZOONOTIC DISEASES. (a) Using available resources and as the department determines appropriate, the department shall support access to year-round laboratory testing for vector-borne and zoonotic diseases to record and address local outbreaks of vector-borne and zoonotic diseases in counties on or near the Texas-Mexico border that are most at risk for the year-round outbreaks, including Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, El Paso, Frio, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, McMullen, Pecos, Presidio, Real, Reeves, Starr, Sutton, Terrell, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, Zapata, and Zavala Counties.

(b)  The department may directly authorize access to the testing or may enter into a local agreement under Section 12.073 to authorize access to the testing. The testing may include, as appropriate:

(1)  arboviral testing;

(2)  speciation testing;

(3)  PCR testing;

(4)  IgM testing;

(5)  IgG testing; and

(6)  any other testing the department determines appropriate.

SECTION 2.  The Department of State Health Services is required to implement a provision of this Act only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, the department may, but is not required to, implement a provision of this Act using other appropriations available for that purpose.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.