87R9042 EAS-F

By:  Turner of Dallas H.B. No. 2538

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response.

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

SECTION 1.  Section 81.402, Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 81.402.  PURPOSE AND FINDINGS. The legislature finds that:

(1)  infectious diseases are responsible for more deaths worldwide than any other single cause;

(2)  the State of Texas has a responsibility to safeguard and protect the health and well-being of its citizens from the spread of infectious diseases;

(3)  [~~on September 30, 2014, the first case of Ebola diagnosed in the United States occurred in Dallas, Texas;~~

[~~(4)~~] addressing infectious diseases requires the coordination and cooperation of multiple governmental entities at the local, state, and federal levels;

(4) [~~(5)~~]  public health and medical preparedness and response guidelines are crucial to protect the safety and welfare of our citizens; and

(5) [~~(6)~~]  Texas has nationally recognized infectious disease experts and other highly trained professionals across the state with the experience needed to minimize any potential risk to the people of Texas.

SECTION 2.  Section 81.403, Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 81.403.  TASK FORCE; DUTIES. (a) The Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response is created as an advisory panel to the governor and the legislature.

(b)  The task force shall:

(1)  provide expert, evidence-based assessments, protocols, and recommendations related to state responses to infectious diseases [~~, including Ebola~~]; [~~and~~]

(2)  develop a strategic emergency plan for use by local governments and agencies;

(3)  develop a comprehensive plan to ensure this state is prepared for a widespread outbreak of an infectious disease and has the resources and infrastructure to provide a rapid response that effectively protects the safety and well-being of this state's residents;

(4)  evaluate the supplies and resources available to address an infectious disease outbreak; and

(5)  serve as a reliable and transparent source of information and education for Texas leadership and citizens.

(c)  In developing the plan described by Subsection (b)(3), the task force shall:

(1)  use the significant expertise of medical professionals in this state and other states;

(2)  collaborate with local government officials and local health officials;

(3)  use, as practicable, the state emergency management plan and structure;

(4)  identify various responses necessary to address an epidemic or pandemic of infectious disease;

(5)  establish a command and control structure that will ensure effective preparations and response if the governor declares a state of disaster under Chapter 418, Government Code, or takes other emergency action under other law; and

(6)  coordinate with appropriate entities to ensure public awareness and education regarding any epidemic or pandemic threat.

SECTION 3.  Section 81.404, Health and Safety Code, is amended by amending Subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) and adding Subsection (f) to read as follows:

(a)  The commissioner [~~governor~~] may appoint members of the task force as necessary, including members from relevant state agencies, members with expertise in infectious diseases and other issues involved in the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases, and members from institutions of higher education in this state. In appointing the members, the commissioner shall ensure that the membership of the task force reflects the ethnic, economic, and geographic diversity of this state. The commissioner [~~governor~~] shall appoint to the task force:

(1)  at least one member who is a county judge of a county with a population of less than 100,000;

(2)  at least one member who is a county judge of a county with a population of 100,000 or more;

(3)  at least one member who is a county judge of a county with a population of 1 million or more;

(4)  at least one member who is a representative of a local health authority serving a rural area;

(5) [~~(4)~~]  at least one member who is a representative of a local health authority serving an urban area;

(6) [~~(5)~~]  at least one member who is a licensed nurse;

(7)  at least one member who is a physician licensed in this state;

(8)  at least one member who is a representative of a hospital system;

(9)  at least three members who each serve as president of a publicly supported medical school or health-related institution of higher education, or an employee designated by each president;

(10)  at least one member who is a representative of a business with less than 100 employees;

(11)  at least one member who is a representative of a business with more than 100 employees;

(12)  at least one member who is a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of employees and workers in this state; and

(13) [~~(6)~~]  at least one member who is emergency medical services personnel, as defined by Section 773.003.

(b)  The commissioner [~~governor~~] shall appoint a director of the task force from among the members of the task force.

(c)  The commissioner [~~governor~~] may fill any vacancy that occurs on the task force and may appoint additional members as needed.

(d)  Members of the task force serve at the pleasure of the commissioner [~~governor~~].

(f)  The commissioner may establish one or more working groups composed of task force members to study, discuss, and address specific policy issues and recommendations. The working groups shall refer the issues and recommendations to the task force for further consideration.

SECTION 4.  Section 81.405, Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 81.405.  REPORTS. (a) Not later than September 1 of each even-numbered year, the [~~The~~] task force shall prepare and submit to the governor and the legislature [~~may make~~] written reports on its findings and recommendations, including legislative recommendations[~~, to the governor and legislature~~].

(b)  The task force shall report to the department, governor, and legislature as often as is necessary to make recommendations for updating protocols addressing infectious diseases.

SECTION 5.  Section 81.407, Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 81.407.  ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT. (a) State agencies with members on the task force shall provide administrative support for the task force.

(b)  The legislature may appropriate money to the department for the administrative and operational expenses of the task force.

SECTION 6.  Section 81.408, Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 81.408.  REIMBURSEMENT. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), task [~~Task~~] force members serve without compensation and are not entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses.

(b)  The task force members are entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in serving on the task force.

SECTION 7.  Subchapter J, Chapter 81, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Section 81.409 to read as follows:

Sec. 81.409.  INFECTIOUS DISEASE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FACILITIES AT HEALTH CARE-RELATED INSTITUTIONS. The commission may enter into contracts or agreements to assist in the establishment of infectious disease emergency preparedness facilities at health care-related institutions in this state. The contracts or agreements may provide for:

(1)  developing and equipping the infectious disease emergency preparedness facilities; and

(2)  purchasing materials, equipment, services, or other items the commission considers necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 8.  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the commissioner of state health services shall make appointments to the Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response required under Subchapter J, Chapter 81, Health and Safety Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 9.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.