By:  Huffman, Bettencourt S.B. No. 21

     Nelson

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to rules for fixing the amount of bail, to the release of certain defendants on a bail bond or personal bond, to related duties of certain officers taking bail bonds and of a magistrate in a criminal case, to charitable bail organizations, and to the reporting of information pertaining to bail bonds.

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

SECTION 1.  Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by adding Article 17.027 to read as follows:

Art. 17.027.  RELEASE ON BAIL OF DEFENDANT CHARGED WITH OFFENSE COMMITTED WHILE ON BAIL. Notwithstanding any other law, if a defendant is charged with committing an offense while released on bail for another offense, only the court before whom the case for the previous offense is pending may release the defendant on bail. The defendant must be presented to the court within the period prescribed by Article 15.17, either in person or by means of videoconference, in accordance with that article.

SECTION 2.  Article 17.03, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by amending Subsections (a) and (b) and adding Subsection (b-2) to read as follows:

(a)  Except as provided by Subsection (b), [~~or~~] (b-1), or (b-2), a magistrate may, in the magistrate's discretion, release the defendant on personal bond without sureties or other security.

(b)  Only the court before whom the case is pending may release on personal bond a defendant who:

(1)  is charged with an offense under the following sections of the Penal Code:

(A)  Section 19.03 (Capital Murder);

(B)  Section 20.04 (Aggravated Kidnapping);

(C)  Section 22.021 (Aggravated Sexual Assault);

(D)  [~~Section 22.03 (Deadly Assault on Law Enforcement or Corrections Officer, Member or Employee of Board of Pardons and Paroles, or Court Participant);~~

[~~(E)~~]  Section 22.04 (Injury to a Child, Elderly Individual, or Disabled Individual);

(E) [~~(F)~~]  Section 29.03 (Aggravated Robbery);

(F) [~~(G)~~]  Section 30.02 (Burglary);

(G) [~~(H)~~]  Section 71.02 (Engaging in Organized Criminal Activity);

(H) [~~(I)~~]  Section 21.02 (Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Children); or

(I) [~~(J)~~]  Section 20A.03 (Continuous Trafficking of Persons);

(2)  is charged with a felony under Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or Section 485.033, Health and Safety Code, punishable by imprisonment for a minimum term or by a maximum fine that is more than a minimum term or maximum fine for a first degree felony; or

(3)  does not submit to testing for the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body as requested by the court or magistrate under Subsection (c) of this article or submits to testing and the test shows evidence of the presence of a controlled substance in the defendant's body.

(b-2)  A magistrate may not release on personal bond a defendant who:

(1)  is charged with committing an offense while released on bail or community supervision for an offense involving violence, as defined by Article 17.15(b); or

(2)  has previously been convicted of an offense involving violence, as defined by Article 17.15(b).

SECTION 3.  Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by adding Articles 17.0501, 17.0502, and 17.071 to read as follows:

Art. 17.0501.  REQUIRED TRAINING. The Department of Public Safety shall develop training courses that relate to the use of the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the department and that are directed to each magistrate, judge, sheriff, peace officer, or jailer required to obtain criminal history record information under this chapter, as necessary to enable the person to fulfill those requirements.

Art. 17.0502.  COMPLETION OF BAIL FORM. (a) Each magistrate, judge, sheriff, peace officer, or jailer shall, at the time the person sets bail for a defendant under this chapter, complete the form promulgated by the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System under Section 72.036, Government Code.

(b)  A person completing a form under this article shall electronically deliver the completed form to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System as soon as is practicable.

Art. 17.071.  CHARITABLE BAIL ORGANIZATIONS. (a) In this article, "charitable bail organization" means a person who solicits donations from the public for the purpose of depositing money with a court in the amount of a defendant's bail bond. The term does not include:

(1)  a person soliciting donations with respect to a defendant who is a member of the person's family, as determined under Section 71.003, Family Code; or

(2)  a nonprofit corporation organized for the purpose of religious worship.

(b)  This article does not apply to a charitable bail organization that pays a bail bond for not more than three defendants in any 180-day period.

(c)  A charitable bail organization shall file in the office of the county clerk of each county where the organization intends to pay bail bonds an affidavit designating the individuals authorized to pay bonds on behalf of the organization.

(d)  A charitable bail organization may only pay bail bonds for indigent defendants who:

(1)  are not charged with an offense involving violence, as defined by Article 17.15(b); and

(2)  have not previously been convicted of an offense involving violence, as defined by Article 17.15(b).

(e)  Not later than the 10th day of each month, a charitable bail organization shall submit, to the sheriff of each county in which the organization files an affidavit under Subsection (c), a report that includes the following information for each defendant for whom the organization paid a bail bond in the preceding calendar month:

(1)  the name of the defendant;

(2)  the cause number of the case;

(3)  the county in which the applicable charge is pending, if different from the county in which the bond was paid; and

(4)  any dates on which the defendant has failed to appear in court as required for the charge for which the bond was paid.

(f)  A charitable bail organization may not pay a bail bond for a defendant at any time the organization is considered to be out of compliance with the reporting requirements of this article.

(g)  A sheriff may suspend a charitable bail organization from paying bail bonds in the sheriff's county for one year if the sheriff determines the organization has paid bonds in violation of this article.

(h)  Chapter 22 applies to a bail bond paid by a charitable bail organization.

(i)  A charitable bail organization may not accept a premium or compensation for paying a bail bond for a defendant.

SECTION 4.  Article 17.15, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

Art. 17.15.  RULES FOR FIXING AMOUNT OF BAIL. (a) The amount of bail to be required in any case is to be regulated by the court, judge, magistrate or officer taking the bail; they are to be governed in the exercise of this discretion by the Constitution and by the following rules:

1.  The bail shall be sufficiently high to give reasonable assurance that the undertaking will be complied with.

2.  The power to require bail is not to be so used as to make it an instrument of oppression.

3.  The nature of the offense and the circumstances under which it was committed are to be considered, including whether the offense is an offense involving violence and whether the violence was directed against a peace officer.

4.  The ability to make bail is to be regarded, and proof may be taken upon this point.

5.  The future safety of a victim of the alleged offense and the community shall be considered.

6.  The criminal history of the defendant, including any other pending criminal charges and any instances in which the defendant failed to appear in court following release on bail, is to be considered.

7.  The citizenship status of the defendant is to be considered.

(b)  In this article, "offense involving violence" means an offense under the following sections of the Penal Code:

(1)  Section 19.02 (murder);

(2)  Section 19.03 (capital murder);

(3)  Section 20.03 (kidnapping);

(4)  Section 20.04 (aggravated kidnapping);

(5)  Section 20A.03 (continuous trafficking of persons);

(6)  Section 21.02 (continuous sexual abuse of young child or children);

(7)  Section 21.11 (indecency with a child);

(8)  Section 22.01(a)(1) (assault), if the offense:

(A)  involved family violence as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code; or

(B)  is punishable as a felony of the second degree under Subsection (b-2) of that section (assault of a peace officer or judge);

(9)  Section 22.011 (sexual assault);

(10)  Section 22.02 (aggravated assault);

(11)  Section 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault);

(12)  Section 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual);

(13)  Section 25.072 (repeated violation of certain court orders or conditions of bond in family violence, child abuse or neglect, sexual assault or abuse, indecent assault, stalking, or trafficking case);

(14)  Section 25.11 (continuous violence against the family);

(15)  Section 29.03 (aggravated robbery); or

(16)  Section 38.14 (taking or attempting to take weapon from peace officer, federal special investigator, employee or official of correctional facility, parole officer, community supervision and corrections department officer, or commissioned security officer).

SECTION 5.  Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by adding Articles 17.1501 and 17.1502 to read as follows:

Art. 17.1501.  CONTINUING EDUCATION. (a) A judge or magistrate with the authority to set bail for defendants shall, within one year after the date the judge or magistrate first assumes office, successfully complete a four-hour course with respect to the judge's or magistrate's duties under Article 15.17 and setting bail in criminal cases.

(b)  Each following year, a judge or magistrate described by Subsection (a) shall successfully complete a two-hour course with respect to the judge's or magistrate's duties under Article 15.17 and setting bail in criminal cases.

(c)  The courses may be completed through a course in bail bond law that is:

(1)  approved by the State Bar of Texas; and

(2)  offered:

(A)  by a public or accredited private institution of higher education in this state; or

(B)  through a program approved by a court education committee.

Art. 17.1502.  BAIL SCHEDULE; HEARING. (a) The judges of the courts trying criminal cases in a county may promulgate a standing order setting out a schedule of suggested bail amounts for any offense over which the courts have jurisdiction under Chapter 4.

(b)  A standing order promulgated in accordance with this article must require that the factors under Article 17.15 be considered before a defendant's bail is set.

(c)  A defendant who is unable to give bail in the amount required by the schedule must be given an opportunity to file with the applicable magistrate a sworn affidavit in substantially the following form:

"On this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ , 20 \_\_\_\_, I have been advised by the (name of the court) Court of the importance of providing true and complete information about my financial situation in connection with the charge pending against me. I am without means to pay \_\_\_\_\_\_ and I hereby request the court to set an appropriate bail. (signature of defendant)."

(d)  The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall promulgate a form to be completed by a defendant filing an affidavit under Subsection (c) to allow a magistrate to assess information relevant to the defendant's financial situation. The form must collect, at a minimum, the following information:

(1)  any income received by the defendant and the defendant's spouse in the preceding two years;

(2)  the defendant's employment history and the employment history of the defendant's spouse, including gross monthly pay, for the preceding two years;

(3)  any cash holdings available to the defendant or the defendant's spouse and the financial institution in which the cash is held;

(4)  the defendant's major non-cash assets, including real estate and motor vehicles;

(5)  money owed to the defendant or to the defendant's spouse;

(6)  any dependents of the defendant or of the defendant's spouse, and the dependents' ages;

(7)  an itemized estimate of the defendant's monthly expenses;

(8)  an estimate of the defendant's tax and legal expenses;

(9)  any anticipated major changes in the defendant's income or expenses; and

(10)  any additional relevant information the defendant is able to provide to explain the defendant's inability to pay bail according to the schedule.

(e)  A defendant who files an affidavit under Subsection (c) is entitled to a hearing before the magistrate on the bail amount. The hearing must be held not later than 48 hours after the affidavit is filed. At the hearing, the magistrate shall require the defendant to sign the form described by Subsection (d) in the presence of the magistrate and under penalty of perjury. After the form is signed, the magistrate shall consider the facts stated in the form and the rules established by Article 17.15 and shall set the defendant's bail. The magistrate shall issue oral or written findings of fact supporting the bail decision.

SECTION 6.  Article 17.20, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

Art. 17.20.  BAIL IN MISDEMEANOR. (a) In cases of misdemeanor, the sheriff or other peace officer, or a jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, may, whether during the term of the court or in vacation, where the officer has a defendant in custody, take of the defendant a bail bond.

(b)  Before taking a bail bond under this article, the sheriff, peace officer, or jailer shall obtain the defendant's criminal history record information through the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the Department of Public Safety. If the defendant is charged with an offense involving violence or has previously been convicted of an offense involving violence, the sheriff, officer, or jailer may not set the amount of the defendant's bail but may take of the defendant a bail bond in the amount fixed by the court. For purposes of this subsection, "offense involving violence" has the meaning assigned by Article 17.15(b).

SECTION 7.  Article 17.22, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

Art. 17.22.  MAY TAKE BAIL IN FELONY. (a) In a felony case, if the court before which the case [~~same~~] is pending is not in session in the county where the defendant is in custody, the sheriff or other peace officer, or a jailer licensed under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, who has the defendant in custody may take the defendant's bail bond in the [~~such~~] amount [~~as may have been~~] fixed by the court or magistrate, or if no amount has been fixed, then in any [~~such~~] amount as the [~~such~~] officer considers [~~may consider~~] reasonable.

(b)  Before taking a bail bond under this article, the sheriff, peace officer, or jailer shall obtain the defendant's criminal history record information through the statewide telecommunications system maintained by the Department of Public Safety. If the defendant is charged with an offense involving violence or has previously been convicted of an offense involving violence, the sheriff, officer, or jailer may not set the amount of the defendant's bail but may take of the defendant a bail bond in the amount fixed by the court. For purposes of this subsection, "offense involving violence" has the meaning assigned by Article 17.15(b).

SECTION 8.  Section 27.005, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 27.005.  EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS. (a) For purposes of removal under Chapter 87, Local Government Code, "incompetency" in the case of a justice of the peace includes the failure of the justice to successfully complete:

(1)  within one year after the date the justice is first elected:

(A)  [~~,~~] an 80-hour course in the performance of the justice's duties; and

(B)  the course described by Article 17.1501(a), Code of Criminal Procedure; and

(2)  each following year:

(A)  [~~,~~] a 20-hour course in the performance of the justice's duties, including not less than 10 hours of instruction regarding substantive, procedural, and evidentiary law in civil matters; and

(B)  the course described by Article 17.1501(b), Code of Criminal Procedure.

(b)  The courses described by Subsections (a)(1)(A) and (a)(2)(A) may be completed in an accredited state-supported school of higher education.

SECTION 9.  Subchapter C, Chapter 71, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 71.0351 to read as follows:

Sec. 71.0351.  BAIL AND PRETRIAL RELEASE INFORMATION. (a) As a component of the official monthly report submitted to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System under Section 71.035, the clerk of each court setting bail in criminal cases shall report:

(1)  the number of defendants for whom bail was set, including:

(A)  the number for each category of offense; and

(B)  the number of personal bonds;

(2)  the number of defendants who posted bail;

(3)  the number of defendants released on bail who subsequently failed to appear or violated a condition of release; and

(4)  the number of defendants who committed an offense while released on bail or community supervision.

(b)  The Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System shall post the information in a publicly accessible place on the agency's Internet website without disclosing any personal information of any defendant, judge, or magistrate.

SECTION 10.  Subchapter C, Chapter 72, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 72.036 to read as follows:

Sec. 72.036.  BAIL FORM. (a) The office shall promulgate a form to be completed each time a magistrate, judge, sheriff, peace officer, or jailer sets a defendant's bail under Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure.

(b)  The form must:

(1)  state the requirements for setting bail under Article 17.15, Code of Criminal Procedure;

(2)  require the person setting bail to certify that the person considered all of the information required under that article; and

(3)  be signed by the person setting the bail.

(c)  The office shall publish each form submitted under Article 17.0502, Code of Criminal Procedure, in a database that is publicly accessible on the office's Internet website.

SECTION 11.  Article 66.102(c), Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  Information in the computerized criminal history system relating to an arrest must include:

(1)  the offender's name;

(2)  the offender's state identification number;

(3)  the arresting law enforcement agency;

(4)  the arrest charge, by offense code and incident number;

(5)  whether the arrest charge is a misdemeanor or felony;

(6)  the date of the arrest;

(7)  for an offender released on bail, whether a warrant was issued for any subsequent failure of the offender to appear in court;

(8)  the exact disposition of the case by a law enforcement agency following the arrest; and

(9) [~~(8)~~]  the date of disposition of the case by the law enforcement agency.

SECTION 12.  A judge or magistrate who is serving on the effective date of this Act must complete the judge's or magistrate's:

(1)  initial training under Article 17.1501(a), Code of Criminal Procedure, as added by this Act, not later than September 1, 2022; and

(2)  first required course under Article 17.1501(b), Code of Criminal Procedure, as added by this Act, not later than September 1, 2023.

SECTION 13.  The changes in law made by this Act apply only to a person who is arrested on or after the effective date of this Act. A person arrested before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the person was arrested, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 14.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.