BILL ANALYSIS

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

With an aging population, Alzheimer's disease continues to rise—as does the likelihood that peace officers will come into contact with an individual with the disease in their community. In many cases, law enforcement officers are not given proper tools or resources to facilitate the understanding necessary to recognize these symptoms.

There is a general understanding that an individual with Alzheimer's may be unable to recognize persons or landmarks that would be familiar to someone without the disease because of memory loss. However, it has not been widely understood that those with Alzheimer's can also be irrational, confused, and even combative because of their perceptions of where they are, what they are doing, and what is happening around them. As a result, individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia have unique communication needs. Many law enforcement officials are not aware of the symptoms or are unaware of the proper techniques needed to effectively communicate with this segment of the population, which may lead to confusion and a possible hostile encounter.

By requiring peace officers to receive specialized training on communication with persons with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, H.B. 568 seeks to improve interactions between law enforcement and this population by equipping officers with techniques for recognizing symptoms, communicating effectively, utilizing alternatives to physical restraints, and identifying signs of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

H.B. 568 amends current law relating to education and training for peace officers on interacting with persons with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

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 Section 1701.253(j), Occupations Code, to require that the 40-hour statewide officer education and training program on de-escalation and crisis intervention techniques include instruction on interacting with persons with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, including instruction on techniques for recognizing symptoms, communicating effectively, employing alternatives to physical restraints, and identifying signs of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

SECTION 2. Requires the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), not later than April 1, 2024, to revise TCOLE's education and training programs as necessary to implement the changes in law made by this Act.

SECTION 3. Makes application of Section 1701.253(j), Occupations Code, as amended by this Act, prospective to April 1, 2024.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2023.