

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 844
By: Patterson
Criminal Jurisprudence
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, a third party must be involved for an injured person to be considered a victim of commercial sexual exploitation under Texas law. This places a burden on the victim to identify another individual who may be unknown or conversely linked closely to the victim. Victims, law enforcement, and social service providers have reported that victims may be unable or unwilling to identify their traffickers due to the bond that such victims sometimes develop with their traffickers or to the fact that exploitation has occurred for such an extended period of time that minors no longer identify as victims themselves. Traffickers and buyers will also target minors who may be in financial or emotionally vulnerable positions in order for exploitation to be less apparent to the victims. H.B. 844 seeks to address these issues by removing the necessity of third-party identification for a person to be considered a victim of human trafficking.

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 this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 844 amends the Penal Code to expand the definition of "traffic" for purposes of the offense of trafficking of persons to include soliciting or patronizing another person by any means. The bill applies only to an offense committed on or after the bill's effective date. The bill provides for the continuation of the law in effect before the bill's effective date for purposes of an offense, or any element thereof, that occurred before that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.