

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 855
By: Gervin-Hawkins
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Grocery store purchases, like other expenditures for meals, are currently reimbursable within certain dollar limits for state employees traveling to conduct official state business, but only if purchased on a day that the employee conducts or travels for state business and only if purchased outside the employee's designated headquarters. This poses an issue for employees of certain agencies such as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Given the nature of TPWD's work, its employees are often required to travel to remote locations in Texas in which there are limited or nonexistent options to purchase food. H.B. 855 seeks to address this issue by allowing state agencies such as TPWD to reimburse state employees for food purchased at a grocery store, supermarket, or other similar retail establishment within an employee's designated headquarters prior to travel to conduct official state business if the food is consumed during that travel.

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. 855 amends the Government Code to authorize an applicable state agency to reimburse a state employee under the Travel Regulations Act for food items purchased at a grocery store, supermarket, or other similar retail establishment within the employee's designated headquarters if the following conditions are satisfied:

- the purchase is made the day before or the day the employee travels to conduct official state business; and
- the employee consumes the items while away from the employee's designated headquarters traveling for official state business.

The bill limits the reimbursement to the prorated portion of food items the employee consumes each day while traveling and establishes that such a purchase is considered a meal expense for purposes of determining the limit established by the travel provisions of the General Appropriations Act for meal expenses. The bill requires an agency to develop a policy for authorizing such grocery reimbursements before the agency may reimburse an employee.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.