

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 3553
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Criminal Justice
5/12/2023
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2019, Texas had the second-highest number of reported cases of human trafficking in the nation, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. This volume of cases may be due to Texas being a large state with one of the most-crossed international borders in the world.

Human trafficking has infiltrated college campuses across the nation, with numerous cases reported on Texas campuses in the last decade. College students are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse due to the transition to college life and the lack of resources and knowledge at their disposal. Factors such as economic instability, living away from home for the first time, common use of alcohol, and immigration status make college students especially susceptible to exploitation and trafficking.

H.B. 3553 seeks to deter human trafficking and exploitation on college campuses and align those offenses with protections of applicable Penal Code provisions established by the 87th Legislature by enhancing the penalty from a second degree felony to a first degree felony for the offense involving trafficking of a person on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of a public, private, or independent institution of higher education.

H.B. 3553 amends current law relating to increasing the criminal penalty for the offense of trafficking of persons if committed at certain locations.

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 20A.02(b-1), Penal Code, to provide that an offense under Section 20A.02 (Trafficking of Persons) is a felony of the first degree punishable by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for a term of not more than 99 years or less than 25 years if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the actor committed the offense in a location that was on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of the premises of an institution of higher education or private or independent institution of higher education, as defined by Section 61.003 (Definitions), Education Code.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2023.