

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 3553
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Criminal Jurisprudence
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill expressly does one or more of the following: creates a criminal offense, increases the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or changes 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. 3553 amends the Penal Code to include a public, private, or independent institution of higher education among the premises of or within 1,000 feet of which a trafficking of persons offense results in the penalty being enhanced from a second degree felony to a first degree felony offense 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.

H.B. 3553 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.