

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 2315
By: Hughes
International Relations & Economic Development
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current federal law restricts the consolidation of federally funded social services with workforce development programs. Utah is the only state in the country allowed to consolidate workforce and social services since its previously existing, consolidated program is "grandfathered." Every other state, including Texas, must service the needs of qualified applicants for social services through separate programs. These separately run programs are more costly and inefficient. If social service programs in Texas were consolidated, they would be more effective, cost efficient, and have the ability to service individuals with a single case manager. Trigger legislation is needed to prepare for the implementation of consolidated programs when federal law allows. S.B. 2315 creates a task force to develop a consolidation plan for applicable state and local agencies and services to be ready when the federal law or guidance allows the consolidation of safety net programs in Texas.

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

S.B. 2315 amends the Labor Code to establish the task force on consolidation of workforce and social services. The bill requires the task force to develop a plan for best courses of action and a regulatory framework for the consolidation of workforce development programs administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and social services programs administered by the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and to make recommendations to the legislature regarding the consolidation of programs. The bill requires the consolidation plan developed by the task force to:

- examine all state resources, including financial, manpower, and technology resources, to determine if those resources are being used effectively and efficiently to achieve the desired outcomes for recipients of the workforce development and social services programs and for the purposes of the programs' intended goals;
- identify opportunities for cost savings or reallocations of resources to improve the effectiveness of the programs by streamlining essential functions and eliminating duplicative efforts;
- be designed to improve the delivery of the programs by ensuring that applicants for and recipients of the services provided are better served by having access to a single point of contact case manager for all services sought or received; and

- identify the changes to federal law that would be necessary to implement the consolidation plan.

The task force consists of nine members appointed evenly by the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives not later than January 1, 2024. A vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. The bill establishes that members of the task force serve without compensation or reimbursement for expenses.

S.B. 2315 requires TWC and HHSC to provide staff and administrative support as necessary to enable the task force to carry out its duties, including by providing meeting space, staff to assist the task force in conducting research and drafting the consolidation plan and related materials, and funding available from existing resources appropriated to TWC or HHSC to pay for costs associated with the task force's functions. The bill requires the task force, not later than December 31, 2024, to prepare and submit to the legislature a report that includes a description of the activities of the task force, the consolidation plan developed by the task force, and the findings and recommendations of the task force. The bill abolishes the task force and expires September 1, 2025.

S.B. 2315 establishes that its purpose is to provide for the creation of a task force to develop a plan for the consolidation of workforce development programs administered by TWC and social services programs administered by HHSC. The bill establishes that the U.S. Congress, though federal law and guidance currently restricts the consolidation of these federally funded services, is considering legislation to reverse the federal restrictions on the consolidation of these federally funded services and that the task force would provide an opportunity for Texas to implement a consolidation plan, if and when federal law allows.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.