By: Lopez of Cameron H.B. No. 3796

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a task force to analyze the provision of financial assistance from the flood infrastructure fund for the improvement of artificial drainage systems in certain coastal and border regions.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS. In this section:

(1) "Board" means the Texas Water Development Board.

(2) "Fund" means the flood infrastructure fund established under Section 15.533, Water Code.

(3) "Task force" means the artificial drainage systems task force.

SECTION 2. TASK FORCE. (a) The artificial drainage systems task force is established to identify inadequacies in and suggest improvements for the provision of financial assistance for artificial drainage systems to communities and drainage districts in coastal and border regions of this state that lack topographic relief, slope, and naturally defined floodways.

(b) The task force is composed of:

(1) an equal number of members of the house of representatives and members of the senate with the members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of the house and the members of the senate appointed by the lieutenant governor;

(2) individuals to represent the interests of drainage

districts, municipalities, and counties located in coastal and border regions, appointed in equal numbers by the speaker of the house of representatives and the lieutenant governor; and

(3) representatives of the board, appointed by the executive administrator of the board.

(c) The task force shall analyze the requirements associated with the provision of financial assistance from the fund and identify possible changes to those requirements that would facilitate the improvement of artificial drainage systems in coastal and border regions, including:

(1) alterations to the scoring criteria used to determine the eligibility for and the amount of loans and grants provided from the fund, such as:

(A) the inclusion of scoring criteria that prioritize improvements to an artificial drainage system; or

(B) scoring criteria to be used for communities with artificial drainage systems that are based on a social vulnerability index instead of income levels; and

(2) the feasibility of:

(A) providing no-interest loans for improvements to an artificial drainage system;

(B) introducing a loan forgiveness program for political subdivisions with outstanding loans from the fund;

(C) increasing grant funding from the fund for communities with artificial drainage systems; or

(D) revising the income levels used to determine the eligibility for or the amount of a grant or loan from the fund

for communities with artificial drainage systems.

(d) The task force shall hold public hearings in coastal and border regions of this state, including hearings in El Paso, the Rio Grande Valley, and Corpus Christi.

SECTION 3. REPORT. Not later than December 21, 2024, the task force shall prepare and submit to the board, the speaker of the house of representatives, the lieutenant governor, and the governor a report that includes recommendations identified by the task force.

SECTION 4. EXPIRATION. The task force is abolished and this Act expires January 1, 2025.

SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.