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| BILL ANALYSIS |

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| H.B. 1716 |
| By: Darby |
| Human Services |
| Committee Report (Unamended) |

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| **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**  The bill author has informed the committee that the current mental health workforce in Texas is not meeting the critical demand for essential mental health services, that the pipeline for training the additional workforce is insufficient, and that the state is investing in new mental health facilities without a long-term plan for the personnel needed to support the facilities. H.B. 1716 seeks to address this situation by allowing licensed marriage and family therapist associates, licensed master social workers, and licensed professional counselor associates who are working toward clinical licensure to be reimbursed through Medicaid in an effort to incentivize graduates to become clinicians and increase the number of providers who are able to serve Texans receiving Medicaid. |
| **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. 1716 amends the Human Resources Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to assure that a Medicaid recipient may select one of the following providers to perform any health care service or procedure covered under Medicaid, including a service or procedure performed at a federally qualified health center as defined by federal law, if the selected provider is licensed and authorized by law to perform the service or procedure:   * a licensed marriage and family therapist associate who is working toward fulfilling the supervised practice requirements to be a licensed marriage and family therapist; * a licensed master social worker who is actively pursuing the education and training to be a licensed clinical social worker; or * a licensed professional counselor associate who is working toward fulfilling the supervised practice requirements to be a licensed professional counselor.   H.B. 1716 requires HHSC to provide reimbursement under Medicaid to such a provider who is selected by a Medicaid recipient and provides a covered service or procedure that the provider is authorized by law to perform. The bill requires HHSC to ensure the following:   * that the provider is reimbursed at a rate equal to 50 percent of the reimbursement rate established for a licensed psychiatrist or licensed psychologist for providing similar services; and * that the provided reimbursement is capped at 3,000 hours or, if applicable, the number of hours of clinical practice or other experience the provider is required to complete to qualify for the applicable license.   The bill requires these reimbursement requirements to be liberally construed.  H.B. 1716 updates the provision requiring HHSC, subject to appropriations, to assure that a Medicaid recipient may select a licensed master social worker to perform any covered health care service or procedure the social worker is authorized by law to perform to make the requirement applicable instead with respect to a licensed clinical social worker.  If before implementing any provision of the bill a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision, the agency affected by the provision must request the waiver or authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the waiver or authorization is granted. |
| **EFFECTIVE DATE**  September 1, 2025. |
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