

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 114  
By: Cortez  
Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The bill author has informed the committee of the need for more effective oversight and administration of veterans' mental health services in Texas and that, while these programs are administered by the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) is better equipped to tailor mental health initiatives to veterans' unique needs. H.B. 114 seeks to address this issue by transferring oversight of veteran-focused mental health programs from HHSC to TVC in order to improve program efficiency, accessibility, and coordination with federal and local resources and by establishing a grant program to fund community-based mental health initiatives that requires grant recipients to secure matching funds based on county population size, ensuring equitable funding distribution and encouraging private and local investment in veteran mental health support.

### **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**

#### **Grant Program for Mental Health Services for Veterans and Their Families**

H.B. 114 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting community mental health programs providing services and treatment to veterans and their families, to the extent funds are appropriated to TVC for that purpose, and to ensure that each grant recipient obtains or secures contributions to match awarded grants in amounts of money or other consideration. The bill establishes the following:

- the money or other consideration obtained or secured by TVC may, as determined by the executive director of TVC, include cash or in-kind contributions from private contributors or local governments but may not include state or federal funds; and
- money appropriated to or obtained by TVC for the program must be disbursed directly to grant recipients by TVC, as authorized by the executive director.

H.B. 114 requires TVC to condition each grant, for services and treatment provided in a single county, on a potential grant recipient providing funds from non-state sources in a total amount at least equal to one of the following:

- 25 percent of the grant amount if the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment in a county with a population of less than 100,000;
- 50 percent of the grant amount if the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment in a county with a population of 100,000 or more but less than 250,000; or
- 100 percent of the grant amount if the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment in a county with a population of 250,000 or more.

H.B. 114 requires TVC to condition each grant, for a community mental health program that provides services and treatment in more than one county, on a potential grant recipient providing funds from non-state sources in a total amount at least equal to one of the following:

- 25 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population in which the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a population of less than 100,000;
- 50 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population in which the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a population of 100,000 or more but less than 250,000; or
- 100 percent of the grant amount if the county with the largest population in which the community mental health program to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a population of 250,000 or more.

H.B. 114 requires all grants awarded under the program to be used for the sole purpose of supporting community programs that provide mental health care services and treatment to veterans and their families and that coordinate such services with other transition support services. The bill requires TVC to select grant recipients based on the submission of applications or proposals by nonprofit and governmental entities and requires the executive director to develop evaluation criteria for those applications or proposals and the selection of grant recipients. The bill selection criteria must do the following:

- evaluate and score:
  - fiscal controls for the project;
  - project effectiveness;
  - project cost; and
  - an applicant's previous experience with grants and contracts;
- address the possibility of and method for making multiple awards; and
- include other factors that the executive director considers relevant.

The bill establishes that a reasonable amount not to exceed five percent of the money appropriated by the legislature for purposes of the grant program may be used by TVC to pay administrative costs of implementing the program.

### **Program Transition From DSHS to TVC**

H.B. 114 repeals the Health and Safety Code provisions establishing the mental health intervention program for veterans developed under the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Under current Government Code provisions, TVC coordinates with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to administer the program developed by DSHS, but the bill amends those Government Code provisions to transfer the program to TVC and remove the requirement for TVC and HHSC to coordinate to administer the program. The bill assigns to TVC, in addition to its current duties regarding the program, the same general powers and duties that are assigned to DSHS by the repealed Health and Safety Code provisions and transfers the same annual reporting requirement regarding the program from DSHS to TVC. The bill specifies that HHSC, instead of DSHS, jointly verifies with TVC that each state agency authorized to award a grant for the provision of mental health services to veterans or veterans' families has adopted policies to ensure compliance with the applicable program requirements.

## **Veteran Suicide Prevention Action Plan**

H.B. 114 requires TVC to develop a comprehensive action plan to increase access to and availability of professional veteran health services to prevent veteran suicides in collaboration with the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance Center Implementation Academy of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, veteran advocacy groups, medical providers, and any other organization or interested party TVC considers appropriate. The bill requires the action plan to do the following:

- identify opportunities for raising awareness of and providing resources for veteran suicide prevention;
- identify opportunities to increase access to veteran mental health services;
- identify funding resources to provide accessible, affordable veteran mental health services;
- provide measures to expand public-private partnerships to ensure access to quality, timely mental health services;
- provide for proactive outreach measures to reach veterans needing care;
- provide for peer-to-peer service coordination, including training, certification, recertification, and continuing education for peer coordinators; and
- address suicide prevention awareness, measures, and training regarding veterans involved in the justice system.

The bill requires TVC to make specific short-term and long-term statutory, administrative, and budget-related recommendations to the legislature and the governor regarding the policy initiatives and reforms necessary to implement the action plan and requires those initiatives and reforms to be fully implemented by September 1, 2027. These provisions expire September 1, 2027.

## **Repealed Provisions**

H.B. 114 repeals the following provisions:

- Subchapter I, Chapter 1001, Health and Safety Code; and
- Sections 531.0925 and 531.0992, Government Code.

## **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025.