

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 198
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Intergovernmental Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Due to exposure to toxic substances while on duty, firefighters can face an increased risk of long-term health problems, including an elevated risk of cancer. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), 72 percent of IAFF member line-of-duty deaths in 2023 were caused by occupational cancer. Additionally, according to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, from 2002 to 2019, cancer accounted for 66 percent of career firefighter line-of-duty deaths. Texas has recently lost many firefighters because of cancer, including Lieutenant Dennis Page from the Dallas Fire Department, Captain William Gunderson from the Houston Fire Department, and James Bobbitt and Wade Cannon from the Flower Mound Fire Department. Cannon's diagnosis and commitment to spreading cancer awareness prompted several of the members of the Flower Mound Fire Department to undergo cancer screenings, leading to early cancer detections for two colleagues. H.B. 198 seeks to combat the elevated risk of cancer to firefighters by requiring political subdivisions that employ firefighters to offer occupational cancer screenings to firefighters at no cost during the firefighter's fifth year of service and then subsequently every three years.

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. 198 amends the Local Government Code to require a political subdivision that employs firefighters to offer an occupational cancer screening to each firefighter at no cost to the firefighter in the fifth year of the firefighter's employment, and once every three years following the initial screening. The screening must be confidential and test for each type of cancer, including colorectal cancer; lung cancer; brain cancer; and prostate cancer, if applicable. The bill defines "firefighter" as an individual defined as fire protection personnel under Government Code provisions relating to the regulation of and assistance to fire fighters and fire departments by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.