

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
89R15492 JTZ-F

H.B. 491
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Business & Commerce
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Illicit massage businesses (IMBs) serve as fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking, often operating under the guise of legitimate businesses, using deceptive licensing and business practices to avoid detection.

Local attorneys typically pursue civil injunctions against IMBs to shut them down; however, many IMBs simply rebrand and reopen nearby, rendering injunctions a temporary fix that do little to impact their profitability or long-term operations.

H.B. 491 seeks to permit local government attorneys to collect fees of up to \$10,000 per violation in Chapter 455 actions against alleged IMBs to help further fund anti-human trafficking enforcement efforts.

H.B. 491 amends current law relating to certain civil penalties collected for violations of laws regulating massage therapy.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 455.351, Occupations Code, by adding Subsection (f-1), as follows:

(f-1) Provides that a civil penalty recovered in an action by a district or county attorney under Section 455.351 (Injunctive Relief; Civil Penalty) is required to be deposited to the credit of the general fund of the county where the court is located and used only for purposes of combatting human trafficking. Provides that a civil penalty recovered in an action by a municipal attorney under this section is required to be deposited to the credit of the general fund of the municipality and used only for purposes of combatting human trafficking.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2025.