

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 510
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Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to a report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, homelessness in Texas grew in 2023 by more than 12 percent. For 2024, the Texas Homeless Network estimated that more than 57,000 Texans are experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, homeless individuals face major challenges when attempting to obtain a form of government identification, such as not being able to pay for the cost of obtaining the ID or access transportation or technology needed to apply for the ID. The bill author has informed the committee that this issue even affects a person's ability to access homeless shelters, as some shelters require a person to have a valid form of ID, such as a birth certificate. H.B. 510 seeks to address this issue by allowing homeless individuals to request a certified copy of their birth certificate from the state registrar, a local registrar, or a county clerk, without being required to pay a fee.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 510 amends the Health and Safety Code to require the state registrar of vital statistics, a local registrar, or a county clerk to issue to a homeless individual, on the individual's request and without fee, a certified copy of the individual's birth record. The bill requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission by rule to do the following:

- adopt a process to verify a person's status as a homeless individual; and
- prescribe the documentation necessary for issuance of a certified copy of a birth record to a homeless individual whose status is verified through the process.

The bill prohibits the Department of State Health Services from requiring a homeless individual to provide a physical address of the individual's residence to satisfy any of the bill's requirements.

H.B. 510 defines "homeless individual" as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or whose primary nighttime residence is one of the following:

- a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill;
- an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

- a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The term does not include an individual who is imprisoned or otherwise detained in a correctional facility.

H.B. 510 requires the executive commissioner to adopt the rules required by the bill as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date. The bill applies to an application for a birth record submitted on or after the bill's effective date. An application for a birth record submitted before the bill's effective date is governed by the law in effect on the date the application was submitted, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.