

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1295
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Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, personal health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services necessary to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others. The bill author has informed the committee that low health literacy can create significant barriers to effective health care utilization, including challenges with medication adherence and communication between patients and health care providers, and that Texas currently lacks a dedicated, coordinated approach to addressing the unique challenges posed by low health literacy, which could otherwise empower patients to better navigate the health care system and support more sustainable health care practices. Additionally, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) *2023-2028 Texas State Health Plan* identifies health literacy as a key factor in improving health outcomes and promoting preventative health measures. Furthermore, research indicates that low health literacy has a substantial economic impact, with a 2007 George Washington University study estimating costs to the United States of up to \$238 billion annually due to increased health care utilization and poorer health outcomes. H.B. 1295 seeks to address these issues by requiring the existing statewide health coordinating council to develop and update biennially a long-range plan for improving health literacy in Texas. The bill also requires the state health plan developed by DSHS to identify the prevalence of low health literacy among health care consumers as a major statewide health concern and to propose strategies for improving health literacy to achieve greater cost-effectiveness and better patient outcomes in the provision of health care.

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. 1295 amends the Health and Safety Code to require the statewide health coordinating council to develop and update at least once every two years a long-range plan for improving health literacy in Texas. The bill defines "health literacy" as the degree to which an individual has the capacity to find, understand, and use health information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions. The bill requires the council, in developing the plan, to study the economic impact of low health literacy on state health programs and health insurance coverage for Texas residents and to do the following:

- identify primary risk factors contributing to low health literacy;

- examine methods for health care practitioners, health care facilities, and other persons to address the health literacy of patients and other health care consumers;
- examine the effectiveness of using quality measures in state health programs to improve health literacy;
- identify strategies for expanding the use of plain language instructions for patients; and
- examine the impact of improved health literacy on enhancing patient safety, reducing preventable events, and increasing medication adherence to attain greater cost-effectiveness and better patient outcomes in the provision of health care.

The bill requires the council, not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, to submit the developed or updated plan to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and each member of the legislature.

H.B. 1295, with respect to the requirement in current law that the state health plan identify major statewide health concerns, includes the prevalence of low health literacy among health care consumers as one such concern to be identified. The bill includes strategies for improving health literacy to attain greater cost-effectiveness and better patient outcomes in the provision of health care among the strategies that the state health plan must propose.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.