

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2929

By: DeAyala

Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Peace officers frequently interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and with various cognitive and developmental conditions, including autism spectrum disorder. However, the bill author has informed the committee that many officers may not receive adequate training to recognize and effectively communicate with individuals on the autism spectrum, and that misunderstandings in these encounters can lead to unnecessary escalation, distress for the individual, and challenges for officers in ensuring public safety. C.S.H.B. 2929 seeks to address this issue and foster safer and more effective interactions between peace officers and individuals with autism spectrum disorder by requiring officers to complete specialized training on interacting with such individuals.

### **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 Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in SECTION 2 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2929 amends the Occupations Code to require the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) by rule to establish and maintain a training program for peace officers on interacting with a person with autism spectrum disorder. The bill requires the training program to be not less than two hours, to be evidence-based, and to include the following topics:

- understanding the nature of autism spectrum disorder and the differing manifestations of the disorder in a person, including:
  - identifying a person with autism spectrum disorder and differentiating that person from another person who does not have the disorder and who may be uncooperative or intending to commit a criminal offense; and
  - understanding the relationship between autism spectrum disorder and criminal or otherwise antisocial behavior;
- effectively communicating with a person with autism spectrum disorder, including best practices on communicating without causing the person unnecessary stress, interviewing and interrogating the person, and de-escalating an interaction with the person;
- locating a person with autism spectrum disorder who has run away and may be in danger;
- recognizing the circumstances under which a person with autism spectrum disorder may be abused, coerced, or criminally exploited, including radicalization of the person;
- ensuring the safety of a person with autism spectrum disorder who is confined in a correctional facility; and

- understanding the laws on taking a person into custody and applying for emergency detention under the Texas Mental Health Code.

The bill requires TCOLE to require an officer, as part of the minimum curriculum requirements, to complete the training program established by the bill. Those minimum curriculum requirements apply only to an officer who first begins to satisfy those requirements on or after January 1, 2026. The bill requires TCOLE, as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date, to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

C.S.H.B. 2929 defines "autism spectrum disorder" as follows:

- a neurobiological disorder or developmental disability that significantly affects verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and social interaction and that meets the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder specified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), 5th Edition, or a later edition; or
- a diagnosis made using a previous edition of the DSM of autism, Asperger's syndrome, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder--Not Otherwise Specified.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2025.

### **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 2929 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Both the introduced and the substitute require the training program to include the topic of understanding the nature of autism spectrum disorder and the differing manifestations of the disorder in a person, but the introduced included knowing how age, gender, and ethnicity affect a person with the disorder as a component of this topic, whereas the substitute does not.