

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 4611  
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Human Services  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Mutual consent voluntary adoption registries allow an adoptee, birth parent, or biological sibling to place themselves on the registry for the purpose of locating other family members who are also registered. In Texas, this is accomplished through the Central Adoption Registry, formerly the Texas Voluntary Adoption Registry, which is maintained by the Department of State Health Services. The bill author has informed the committee that in some instances, birth parents and adoptees have been placed on the registry and were never matched, yet were able to find each other in different ways, which has led to a deeper look into the process that applicants currently go through when trying to register. H.B. 4611 seeks to streamline the application process for and prevent barriers to placement on a mutual consent voluntary adoption registry and provide family members with the best opportunity for connecting with one another by providing for the electronic submission of the application and related materials and for a registrant to be contacted by email in the event a match has been made but there are certain discrepancies preventing the match confirmation, providing for certain fee waivers and information on those waivers, and by removing certain counseling requirements before the match information is released.

### **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. 4611 amends the Family Code to give the administrator of an established mutual consent voluntary adoption registry the option of having an adoptee who is 18 years of age or older electronically sign an online application to the registry for information about the adoptee's birth parents and biological siblings as an alternative to having the adoptee sign a written application. With respect to the conditions that an applicant must satisfy for the administrator to accept such an application for registration, the bill gives an applicant the option of submitting an application for a fee waiver due to financial inability or the applicant's status as being or having been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or in foster care in another state as an alternative to paying all applicable registration fees. The bill requires the administrator of an established mutual consent voluntary adoption registry to ensure that an applicant may submit the application, proof of identity, and any applicable fees or application for such a fee waiver through an online submission portal.

H.B. 4611 includes among the required contents of an application to a mutual consent voluntary adoption registry the applicant's email address and an explanation of the process for applying

for the fee waivers. The bill requires the vital statistics unit of the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date, to update the application as necessary.

H.B. 4611 requires the administrator of a mutual consent voluntary adoption registry to waive users' fees if the applicant is or ever has been in the conservatorship of DFPS or in foster care in another state. The bill requires the process for applying for the fee waivers due to financial inability or if the applicant is or has ever been in such conservatorship or foster care to be displayed prominently on the website of DSHS, the website of each administrator, each online application submission portal, and a written application for registration.

H.B. 4611 requires the administrator of a mutual consent voluntary adoption registry to attempt to contact by email a registrant who has provided an email address if a match has been made but a name or address discrepancy is preventing the administrator from confirming the match.

H.B. 4611 repeals Section 162.413, Family Code, which requires a registration applicant to participate in counseling for not less than one hour with a social worker or mental health professional with expertise in postadoption counseling after the administrator has accepted the application for registration and before the release of confidential information.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2025.