

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 4838
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Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill author has informed the committee that Texas is one of the most linguistically diverse states in the nation, with more than 160 languages spoken across its communities, but that despite this diversity, most emergency and health services in Texas are offered primarily in English. This creates a language gap that can leave residents without access to critical information and services during times of need, including natural disasters and public health emergencies. H.B. 4838 seeks to address these challenges by requiring the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to employ a language access coordinator to assess existing language accessibility across HHSC programs and the 2-1-1 service network, identify gaps, and provide recommendations to expand access for non-English speakers.

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. 4838 requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date, to employ a language access coordinator to conduct an assessment of and identify gaps in non-English speakers' access to the health and human services programs administered by HHSC and 2-1-1 services provided by the Texas Information and Referral Network. The bill requires the language access coordinator, not later than the first anniversary of the date HHSC employs the coordinator, to conduct the required assessment and submit to the executive commissioner of HHSC a written report that summarizes the findings of the assessment and provides recommendations for increasing non-English speakers' access to those programs and services throughout Texas. The bill's provisions expire June 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.