

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 5639
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Corrections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the 2024 Biennial Reentry and Reintegration Services Report published by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the department has established veterans housing programs that give veterans the opportunity to live with their fellow veterans in an environment that promotes rehabilitation and the skills necessary to succeed as a positive member of society. C.S.H.B. 5639 seeks to ensure that TDCJ continues offering a veterans housing program.

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

C.S.H.B. 5639 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date, to establish a housing program for inmates who are veterans. The bill requires the program to do the following:

- dedicate certain cellblocks or dormitories for use in the program; and
- include procedures to verify the eligibility of each inmate during the diagnostic process and allow an inmate who is a veteran to opt in to the housing dedicated for use in the program.

The bill requires TDCJ, in housing inmates under such a program, to comply with the prohibition on housing inmates with different custody classifications in the same cellblock or dormitory except under specified circumstances. The bill authorizes the use of a cellblock or dormitory dedicated for use in the program to house inmates who are not veterans if necessary, but prohibits TDCJ from housing an inmate in such a cellblock or dormitory if TDCJ determines that housing the inmate in that cellblock or dormitory would jeopardize the safety or security of other inmates or staff.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 5639 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 TDCJ to establish a housing program for inmates who are veterans. However, whereas the introduced version's requirement applied only with respect to inmates who are veterans who served not less than 180 days on active duty in the U.S. armed forces and were honorably discharged, the substitute's requirement applies with respect to any inmates who are veterans.