

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 955
By: Parker
Criminal Jurisprudence
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Human trafficking is a global crisis impacting millions of people annually, including adults and children who are subjected to forced labor, sexual exploitation, and other forms of modern-day slavery. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Texas currently ranks second in the nation for reported human trafficking cases. Traffickers utilize various tactics to lure and control their victims, including recruitment from vulnerable populations, such as people experiencing homelessness, foster children, and missing children such as runaways. In some instances, traffickers will recruit potential victims from correctional facilities while they are incarcerated, essentially targeting them while they are in a potentially vulnerable and isolated environment with limited options for escape or assistance. S.B. 955 enhances the penalty for trafficking of persons from or near a correctional facility and clarifies the statutes providing for the enhancement of the penalty for trafficking of persons from or near certain residential treatment centers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill expressly does one or more of the following: creates a criminal offense, increases the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or changes 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

S.B. 955 reenacts and amends Sections 20A.02(b) and (b-1), Penal Code, as amended by Chapters 93 (S.B. 1527), 451 (H.B. 3353), and 452 (H.B. 3554), Acts of the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, to, as applicable, do the following:

- clarify that the criminal penalty for trafficking of persons is enhanced from a second degree felony to a first degree felony if the actor recruited, enticed, or obtained the trafficked person on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of the premises of a shelter or facility operating as a residential treatment center that serves runaway youth, foster children, the homeless, or persons subjected to human trafficking, domestic violence, or sexual assault;
- enhance the penalty for trafficking of persons from a second degree felony to a first degree felony if the actor recruited, enticed, or obtained the trafficked person from a correctional facility while the trafficked person was confined in the facility; and
- include a correctional facility among the premises on or within 1,000 feet of which committing a trafficking of persons offense under current law results in the penalty being enhanced from a second degree felony to a first degree felony punishable by

imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for a term of not more than 99 years or less than 25 years.

S.B. 955 applies only to an offense committed on or after the bill's effective date. An offense committed before the bill's effective date is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For these purposes, an offense was committed before the bill's effective date if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.