

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1370
By: Parker
Intergovernmental Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Counties with populations of more than 2.5 million are currently required to establish and maintain an office of medical examiner, while counties below that threshold may opt to establish one. The bill sponsor has informed the committee that rapid population growth across the state has caused several counties with populations above one million, though below 2.5 million, to face the same need for dedicated medical examiner services, with the current lack of such services potentially impacting the ability to timely and thoroughly investigate deaths. S.B. 1370 seeks to lower the mandatory threshold for counties to establish a medical examiner's office and to clarify that two or more counties, regardless of population size, are authorized to partner to form a medical examiners district.

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

S.B. 1370 amends the Code of Criminal Procedure, with respect to the requirement that the commissioners court of a county having a population of more than 2.5 million establish and maintain the office of medical examiner, to make that requirement applicable to the commissioners court of a county having a population of more than one million and to accordingly clarify that the authorization for the commissioners court of any county to establish and provide for the maintenance of the office of medical examiner applies only with respect to any county with a population of less than one million.

S.B. 1370 clarifies that the authorization for the commissioners court of two or more counties to enter into an agreement to create a medical examiners district and to jointly operate and maintain the office of medical examiner of the district applies regardless of the population size of the counties, subject to the requirements in current law providing that, as follows:

- such a district must include the entire area of all counties involved; and
- such counties within the district must, when taken together, form a continuous area.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.