

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
89R23906 BCH-F

C.S.S.B. 1574
By: Zaffirini
Finance
4/16/2025
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Centers of Excellence Program is an initiative by the Texas Judicial Council to identify, support, and highlight the excellent work done by courts across the state. The program seeks to find those courts with a commitment to excellence in serving their communities, supporting their counties, and representing the judiciary in an outstanding manner. The Texas Judicial Council currently has a process where courts can seek nomination and recognition as a Center of Excellence.

The program is centered around four key performance areas and five statutory compliance areas. The performance areas are a justice's or judge's governance, access, fairness, case flow management, and court operations. The statutory compliance areas are the compliance of the justice's or judge's court with statutory or procedural requirements for judicial reporting, court security, fee collection, indigent defense, and guardianship fraud and abuse prevention.

S.B. 1574 would entitle a justice or judge recognized as a center of excellence to receive one merit payment in each state fiscal year in which the justice or judge is recognized, amounting to five percent of the justice's or judge's annual base salary for that year. This change would incentivize excellence and encourage high performance among justices and judges.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 1574 amends current law relating to a centers of excellence program developed by the Texas Judicial Council for certain justices and judges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Judicial Council in SECTION 1 (Section 71.040, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 71, Government Code, by adding Section 71.040, as follows:

Sec. 71.040. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE. (a) Requires the Texas Judicial Council (council) by rule to develop a centers of excellence program to identify, support, and recognize justices and judges who excel in serving their communities and in representing the judiciary. Requires the council, in awarding a center of excellence recognition to a justice or judge, to consider a justice's or judge's governance, access, fairness, case flow management, and court operations, and the compliance of the justice's or judge's court with statutory or procedural requirements for judicial reporting, court security, fee collection, indigent defense, and guardianship fraud and abuse prevention.

(b) Provides that a justice or judge of an appellate court, district court, statutory county court, county court, justice court, or municipal court is eligible for recognition as a center of excellence and is authorized to apply for recognition on a form and in the manner prescribed by the council.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2025.