By: Miles S.B. No. 349

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the office of community violence intervention and prevention within the Department of State Health Services and a grant program for violence intervention and prevention services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Act.

SECTION 2. Subtitle B, Title 2, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Chapter 56 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 56. OFFICE OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 56.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Advisory committee" means the grant review advisory committee established under Section 56.102.

(2) "Office" means the office of community violence intervention and prevention established under Section 56.051.

Sec. 56.002. RULES. The executive commissioner shall adopt rules as necessary to implement this chapter.

Sec. 56.003. FUNDING. The department shall solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations on behalf of the office to carry out the office's duties under this chapter.

SUBCHAPTER B. OFFICE: ESTABLISHMENT, POWERS, AND DUTIES

Sec. 56.051. ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE. The commissioner

shall establish within the department the office of community violence intervention and prevention for the purposes of:

(1) coordinating and expanding violence intervention and prevention activities;

(2) reducing the incidence of interpersonal violence and homicide;

(3) providing leadership, coordination, and technical assistance to promote effective state and local efforts on reducing preventable injuries and deaths resulting from all forms of physical violence;

(4) collaborating with governmental entities, law enforcement agencies, community-based organizations, business leaders, and other appropriate individuals in this state to develop evidence-based policies, strategies, and interventions to reduce the impacts of violence in this state; and

(5) awarding grants under Subchapter C.

Sec. 56.052. POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) The office shall develop collaborative relationships with state agencies involved in reducing interpersonal violence, including:

(1) child abuse;

(2) elder abuse;

(3) violence involving youth;

(4) family violence;

(5) intimate partner violence;

(6) gun violence;

(7) sexual assault; and

(8) violence against an individual based on the

individual's actual or perceived:

(A) sexual orientation;

(B) gender identity; or

(C) gender expression.

(b) To fulfill the purposes of this chapter, the office shall:

(1) integrate violence intervention and prevention education into state-funded substance use programs;

(2) support the development and implementation of comprehensive, community-based violence intervention and prevention initiatives throughout this state, including initiatives focused on preventing the types of violence described by Subsection (a);

(3) develop and recommend comprehensive wraparound and other support services, including interpersonal violence and suicide prevention programs, to be funded by local governmental entities; and

(4) assist local organizations that provide violence intervention and prevention services in seeking and applying for a grant under Subchapter C.

(c) The office shall develop and implement a public health strategy for implementing the purposes described by Section 56.051. The strategy must require:

(1) the use of culturally competent, community-wide risk assessment tools;

(2) the use of methods to identify individuals in need of intervention or prevention services who rely heavily on public

services;

(3) the provision of cognitive and family-based counseling;

(4) the coordination of available services to prevent incidents of violence; and

(5) as appropriate, technical assistance from culturally competent organizations or individuals.

Sec. 56.053. INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE; DIRECTORY OF VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION SERVICES. (a) The office shall conduct a statewide public health campaign on the impact of violence, strategies to help prevent the occurrence of violence, and the use of alternative dispute resolution methods for addressing incidents of violence.

(b) The office shall develop and post on the department's Internet website a directory of violence intervention and prevention services available in each county in this state.

SUBCHAPTER C. COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION GRANT PROGRAM

Sec. 56.101. ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF GRANT PROGRAM. The office shall establish and administer a community violence intervention and prevention grant program and award grants under the program to improve public health and safety by supporting effective violence reduction strategies throughout this state in communities disproportionately impacted by a high incidence of violence, including:

(1) gun violence;

(2) group violence;

(3) suicides;

(4) family violence;

(5) intimate partner violence; and

(6) violence based on an individual's gender.

Sec. 56.102. ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) The office shall establish the grant review advisory committee to assist the office in reviewing and selecting grant applications for a grant award under this subchapter. The advisory committee must include members:

(1) who have been personally impacted by violence;

(2) who have been incarcerated; and

(3) with hands-on experience implementing evidence-based violence reduction initiatives that incorporate a public health, community-based, or ecological system approach.

(b) The advisory committee shall select a presiding officer from among the advisory committee members.

(c) An advisory committee member serves at the pleasure of the office.

(d) Section 2110.008, Government Code, does not apply to the advisory committee.

Sec. 56.103. ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS. (a) The office, with advice from the advisory committee, shall award grants through a competitive process to counties and municipalities disproportionately impacted by a high incidence of violence and to community-based organizations serving communities disproportionately impacted by a high incidence of violence.

(b) To be awarded a grant under this subchapter, a county,

municipality, or community-based organization shall submit to the office, in the form and manner the office prescribes, a complete application that includes a statement describing:

(1) the community issues or concerns the grant money will address;

(2) the applicant's goals and objectives for use of the grant money, which must include the applicant's plan for implementing an evidence-based violence reduction initiative; and

(3) the applicant's plan to:

(A) enhance local coordination of existing violence intervention and prevention programs; and

(B) minimize the duplication of services.

(c) If appropriate to address regional problems or provide a more comprehensive solution:

(1) a county or municipality may submit a joint application with one or more other counties or municipalities; and

(2) a community-based organization may submit a joint application with one or more other community-based organizations.

Sec. 56.104. REVIEW AND SELECTION OF GRANT APPLICANTS. (a) The office, with assistance and advice from the advisory committee, shall review grant applications submitted under this subchapter and select applicants for grant awards.

(b) In selecting applicants for grant awards, the office shall give preference to applicants whose proposals demonstrate:

(1) the greatest likelihood for reducing violence in the community served by the applicant without contributing to the mass incarceration of individuals;

(2) for a joint application that includes at least one community-based organization, a partnership with one or more entities, including another community-based organization or a public entity;

(3) leadership that reflects the demographics of the community served by the applicant;

(4) experience with formerly incarcerated individuals or individuals who are otherwise involved in the criminal justice system; and

(5) familiarity with individuals who are experiencing or have experienced interpersonal violence.

Sec. 56.105. REQUIRED USE OF GRANT MONEY. (a) A grant recipient shall use a grant awarded under this subchapter to support, expand, or replicate evidence-based violence reduction initiatives focused on interrupting cycles of violence, victimization, and retaliation to reduce the incidence of firearm violence, including:

(1) hospital-based violence intervention programs;

(2) community outreach programs; and

(3) initiatives with focused deterrence strategies.

(b) The office may award a grant under this subchapter only in accordance with a contract between the office and the grant recipient. The contract must include provisions affording the office sufficient control to ensure the public purpose of supporting, expanding, or replicating evidence-based violence reduction initiatives focused on interrupting cycles of violence, victimization, and retaliation is accomplished and this state

receives the return benefit.

(c) Subject to Subsection (b), a county or municipal recipient of a grant awarded under this subchapter must distribute not less than 50 percent of the grant money in this state to one or more of the following:

(1) a community-based organization;

(2) an Indian tribe or tribal organization; or

(3) a public entity primarily focused on community safety or gun violence prevention.

Sec. 56.106. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. Each grant recipient shall report to the office, in a form and at intervals the office prescribes, the recipient's progress toward achieving the grant objectives.

Sec. 56.107. EFFICACY EVALUATION OF GRANT PROGRAM. The office may contract with an independent entity with expertise in evaluating community-based, grant-funded programs to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant program under this subchapter, provided the entity, in conducting the evaluation, uses:

(1) both qualitative and quantitative methods, as appropriate; and

(2) participatory action research methods or other research methods that incorporate subject engagement, to the extent practicable.

SECTION 3. Not later than December 1, 2027:

(1) the commissioner of state health services shall establish the office of community violence intervention and prevention within the Department of State Health Services as

required by Chapter 56, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act; and

(2) the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission shall adopt the rules necessary to implement Chapter 56, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2027.