

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 197
By: Price
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that in recent years there has been a heightened awareness of mental health both in Texas and across the nation, but they sadly note that part of this heightened awareness is the result of suicides among college students and acts of violence on college campuses perpetrated by students. The parties further note that even though many students find their college experience to be exhilarating and life-altering, many others face a pressure-filled and stressful time. Students may be away from established support systems for the first time and will often face peer pressure to engage in activities that can negatively impact physical and emotional well-being. The parties cite research supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, the American College Health Association, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in making the case for increased mental health attention on college campuses, including findings that show a substantial number of people no longer attend college because of a mental health related reason.

H.B. 197 seeks to further reduce the stigma of mental illness, to encourage students needing mental health services to seek out mental health services, and to create cultural awareness and acceptance at institutions of higher education of students' needs for mental health services.

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

H.B. 197 amends the Education Code to require each public institution of higher education to create a web page on the institution's website dedicated solely to information regarding the mental health resources available to students at the institution. The bill requires the web page to include the address of the nearest local mental health authority and requires each institution to post the required information on its website as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.