

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2646
By: Giddings
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Last year, multiple cases of Ebola were confirmed in Texas and, according to interested parties, around 100 people were monitored by local authorities for weeks after their direct or indirect contact with an Ebola patient. The parties note that it became apparent during this monitoring period that neither the local authorities nor the center established to coordinate all of the stakeholders were authorized by state law to release monitoring information to first responders. H.B. 2646 seeks to address this issue.

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. 2646 amends the Health and Safety Code to specify that the medical or epidemiological information regarding cases or suspected cases of diseases or health conditions that is authorized to be released for certain purposes includes information linking a person who is exposed to a person with a communicable disease. The bill includes among the entities to which such information is authorized to be released governmental entities that provide first responders who may respond to a situation involving a potential communicable disease of concern and need the information to properly respond to the situation and a local health department or health authority for a designated monitoring period based on the potential risk for developing symptoms of a communicable disease of concern.

H.B. 2646 requires a local health department or health authority to provide to first responders the physical address of a person who is being monitored by the local department or authority for a communicable disease for the duration of the disease's incubation period. The bill requires the local health department, health authority, or other governmental entity, as applicable, to remove the person's physical address from any computer-aided dispatch system after the monitoring period expires. The bill restricts the release of information to such entities to only the minimum information necessary, as determined by a health authority, local health department, governmental entity, or department.

H.B. 2646 specifies that the conditions under which reports, records, and information relating to cases or suspected cases of diseases or health conditions may be released includes the outbreak of a communicable disease, authorizes such information to be released to first responders, and includes as an authorized purpose for the release of the information protecting the health or life

of a first responder.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.