

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 55
By: Nelson
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Recently, Texas leadership announced a pilot program to support veterans mental health projects around Texas. Interested parties assert that while there are several programs in Texas that provide assistance to veterans, the pilot program is unique because it includes 100 percent matching funds from the private sector to support community mental health programs for veterans. S.B. 55 provides for the establishment of a grant program to accomplish the same purposes.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 55 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting community mental health programs providing services and treatment to veterans with mental illness, to the extent funds are appropriated to HHSC for that purpose. The bill requires HHSC to contract with a private entity to support and administer the grant program and requires the contract to require that HHSC and the private entity each provide one-half of the money that will be awarded under the grant program; that the private entity develop eligibility criteria for grant applicants, acceptable uses of grant money by grant recipients, and reporting requirements for grant recipients; and that the private entity obtain HHSC approval of the developed eligibility criteria, acceptable uses, and reporting requirements before awarding any grants under the program. The bill requires the executive commissioner of HHSC to adopt any rules necessary to implement the grant program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.