

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 578
By: Lucio
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties suggest that the state should do more to improve the mental health of and prevent suicides in the veteran population. C.S.S.B. 578 seeks to address these issues by providing for the creation of the National Center for Warrior Resiliency as well as the development of a comprehensive action plan to increase access to and availability of professional veteran health services to prevent veteran suicides.

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

C.S.S.B. 578 amends the Education Code to require the board of regents of The University of Texas System to establish the National Center for Warrior Resiliency at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UT Health San Antonio) for the purposes of researching issues relating to the detection, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder and comorbid conditions and providing clinical care to enhance the psychological resiliency of military personnel and veterans. The bill vests the center's organization, control, and management in the board and requires the board to provide for the employment of staff and an operating budget for the center and to select the site for the center at UT Health San Antonio. The bill authorizes the board to solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the use and benefit of the center. The bill authorizes the center to enter into agreements or otherwise collaborate with public or private entities to perform the center's research functions. The bill establishes that an employee of the center is an employee of The University of Texas System.

C.S.S.B. 578 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), in collaboration with the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families Technical Assistance Center Implementation Academy of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, veteran advocacy groups, medical providers, and any other organization or interested party HHSC considers appropriate, to develop a comprehensive action plan to increase access to and availability of professional veteran health services to prevent veteran suicides. The bill requires the plan to identify opportunities for raising awareness of and providing resources for veteran suicide prevention; to identify opportunities to increase access to veteran mental health services;

to identify funding resources to provide accessible and affordable veteran mental health services; to provide measures to expand public-private partnerships to ensure access to quality and timely mental health services; to provide for proactive outreach measures to reach veterans needing care; to provide for peer-to-peer service coordination, including training, certification, recertification, and continuing education for peer coordinators; and to address suicide prevention awareness, measures, and training regarding veterans involved in the justice system.

C.S.S.B. 578 requires HHSC to make specific short-term and long-term statutory, administrative, and budget-related recommendations to the legislature and the governor regarding the policy initiatives and reforms necessary to implement the action plan. The bill requires the short-term recommendations to include a plan for state implementation beginning not later than September 1, 2019, and requires the initiatives and reforms in the short-term plan to be fully implemented by September 1, 2021. The bill requires the long-term recommendations to include a plan for state implementation beginning not later than September 1, 2021, and requires the initiatives and reforms in the long-term plan to be fully implemented by September 1, 2027. The bill requires HHSC to include in its strategic plan of operation the plans for implementation of the short-term and long-term recommendations. The bill's Government Code provisions expire September 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2017.

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 578 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

SENATE ENGROSSED

No equivalent provision.

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Subchapter D, Chapter 74, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 74.155 to read as follows:

Sec. 74.155. NATIONAL CENTER FOR WARRIOR RESILIENCY. (a) In this section:

(1) "Board" means the board of regents of The University of Texas System.

(2) "Center" means the National Center for Warrior Resiliency.

(b) The board shall establish the National Center for Warrior Resiliency at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio for purposes of:

(1) researching issues relating to the detection, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder and comorbid conditions; and
(2) providing clinical care to enhance the psychological resiliency of military personnel and veterans.

(c) The organization, control, and management of the center are vested in the board.

(d) The board shall:

(1) provide for the employment of staff and an operating budget for the center; and

(2) select a site for the center at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

(e) The board may solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the use and benefit of the center.

(f) The center may enter into agreements or otherwise collaborate with public or private entities, including other public institutions of higher education, private or independent institutions of higher education, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, and the Texas Veterans Commission, to perform the research functions of the center.

(g) An employee of the center is an employee of The University of Texas System.

SECTION 1. Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, is amended.

SECTION 2. Same as engrossed version.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

SECTION 3. Same as engrossed version.