

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 64  
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Homeland Security & Public Safety  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

In 2019, the number of law enforcement officers (LEOs) who died by suicide nationwide was nearly double the number killed in the line of duty. In Texas alone, nearly 20 LEOs took their own lives. LEOs witness numerous critical incidents during their careers, and exposure to this sort of trauma can lead to several mental health conditions, including depression and PTSD. S.B. 64 seeks to provide support to LEOs in Texas to decrease negative mental health outcomes and the incidences of suicide by creating a voluntary peer-to-peer support network focused on training LEOs to provide support to each other.

### **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 Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in SECTION 1 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 64 amends the Occupations Code to require the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), not later than January 1, 2022, to develop a peer support network for law enforcement officers that includes the following:

- peer-to-peer support;
- training for peer service coordinators and peers that includes suicide prevention training;
- technical assistance for program development, peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers; and
- identification, retention, and screening of licensed mental health professionals.

The bill authorizes TCOLE to contract with an institution of higher education that has appropriate expertise in mental health or law enforcement to develop the network and requires TCOLE, as part of the network, to ensure officers have support in both urban and rural jurisdictions. The bill requires TCOLE to solicit and ensure that specialized training is provided to persons who are peers and who want to provide peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under the network.

S.B. 64 makes information relating to a law enforcement officer's participation in peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under the network confidential. The bill prohibits that information from being disclosed under state public information law by TCOLE, the officer's employing agency, or any other state agency or political subdivision that employs a law enforcement officer participant. The bill prohibits an officer's participation from serving as the basis for a revocation, suspension, or denial of a license by TCOLE or from being considered in any proceeding related to the officer's licensure.

S.B. 64 requires TCOLE to submit a report to the governor and the legislature not later than December 1 of each year that includes the following:

- the number of officers who received peer support through the network;
- the number of peers and peer service coordinators trained;
- an evaluation of the services provided by the network; and
- recommendations for program improvements.

The bill authorizes TCOLE to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.