

- SUBJECT:** DHS liaisons to faith-based community organizations
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Naishtat, Maxey, Chavez, Christian, J. Davis, Noriega, Wohlgemuth
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Telford, Truitt
- WITNESSES:** For — None
- Against — None
- On — Sharon Zambrzycki, Texas Department of Human Services
- BACKGROUND:** In the wake of federal and state welfare-reform legislation, efforts have been made to identify churches and other faith-based organizations that help welfare recipients make the transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency. Currently, no specialized employees within the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) provide outreach services in relation to faith-based organizations.
- DIGEST:** HB 2017 would amend the Human Resources Code by requiring the commissioner of human services to designate one employee from each DHS administrative region to serve as a liaison to faith-based organizations with the potential ability to provide community services for the needy. The commissioner would have to ensure that the primary function of each designated liaison was to:
- communicate with the faith-based organizations regarding the need for private community services to benefit persons in need of assistance who otherwise would require financial or other assistance under programs administered by DHS;
  - promote the involvement of faith-based organizations in meeting the community's needs for assistance; and

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- coordinate the department's efforts with those of other state agencies to promote the involvement of faith-based organizations in providing community services.

HB 2017 would take immediate effect if finally approved by a two-thirds record vote of the membership in each house.