

SUBJECT: Establishing the Border Health Institute in El Paso

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna, Wohlgemuth

0 nays

1 absent — Cuellar

WITNESSES: For — Ann Pauli, Paso del Norte Health Foundation

Against — None

On — William R. Archer, Texas Department of Health; William H. Cunningham, University of Texas System; John T. Montford, Texas Tech University; Diana Natalicio, University of Texas at El Paso

DIGEST: CSHB 2025 would add Chapter 151 to the Education Code, creating the Border Health Institute in El Paso to deliver health care, provide health education, and conduct research on public health in the Texas-Mexico border region. CSHB 2025 specifically would direct the institute to study public health issues including infectious diseases, diabetes, environmental health issues, and children’s health issues.

The chief executive officers or their designees of seven institutions initially would comprise the governing board of the Border Health Institute:

- ! University of Texas at El Paso;
- ! Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso;
- ! El Paso Community College District;
- ! R.E. Thomason General Hospital;
- ! El Paso City/County Health District;
- ! University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, School of Public Health; and
- ! Texas Department of Health.

The board could adopt rules allowing additional entities to become members.

The board would be required to adopt rules governing operations of the board and the institute and could hire any staff necessary to carry out the function of the institute. The board would have to meet at least once a year.

CSHB 2025 would authorize the governing board to accept and manage money appropriated by the Legislature, grants from any entity, and any pledge, gift, or endowment. The board also would manage capital improvements and any real property of the institute.

The institute would have to provide to each member of the board an annual report, including an audited financial statement and status report of each project at the institute.

CSHB 2025 would place the institute under the supervision of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board under Education Code, chapter 61 and associated rules. The coordinating board would have to prepare an impact statement examining the initial implementation of the act and submit it to the institute's board and to the chairs of the House Higher Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee by January 1, 2001.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The Border Health Institute that CSHB 2025 would create is vitally important in addressing the health problems of the Texas-Mexico border area. The institute would focus on Hispanic health, children's health, and infectious and environmental diseases. It would deliver health care, provide health education, and serve as the international headquarters of research on border health issues.

The North American Free Trade Agreement not only has increased trade and population along the Texas-Mexico border but also has raised public awareness and concern about border health problems. Health-care providers in El Paso have witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of illnesses like tuberculosis, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases that affect the border region disproportionately, mainly because of poor socioeconomic conditions and inadequate health care in the region.

The Border Health Institute would be operated by a consortium of institutions

known for their expertise in health. Their combined resources could build the institute into an internationally renowned establishment that would attract researchers and research dollars from other parts of the country and the world.

In December 1998, the University of Texas System and Texas Tech University signed a collaborative agreement dedicated to creating a future health campus in El Paso. Establishing the Border Health Institute would be the next logical step.

The proposed institute is expected to receive money earmarked from the settlement of the state's lawsuit against the tobacco industry as well as from private donations. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation has promised \$9 million to the institute over five years, and the El Paso community has made a commitment to donate land for the institute.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 2025 would create a new institution to study what the seven component institutions already study. This would introduce a new bureaucracy requiring new money to pay new employees. The new institute may do no more than duplicate what existing institutions already do or could do if they received the same funding.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added the provision for the Higher Education Coordinating Board to supervise the Border Health Institute. The substitute also would require the coordinating board to submit its implementation impact statement to the higher education committees of each house and to the institute's governing board, rather than to the higher education or border affairs committees in each house, as in the original bill.

A similar bill, SB 1660 by Shapleigh and Duncan, has been referred to the Senate Committee on Border Affairs.

HB 1945 by Junell and Cuellar would create permanent health-related endowment funds with money from the tobacco lawsuit settlement. The House Appropriations Committee reported CSHB 1945 favorably on March 17, and

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the committee report has been sent to the Calendars Committee. Article 12 of CSHB 1 by Junell, the general appropriations bill, would appropriate the funds necessary for HB 1945.