

- SUBJECT:** Expanding faith- and community-based HHS initiatives
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health —favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Alvarado, Coleman, S. Davis, Gonzales, S. King, Laubenberg, Schwertner, Truitt, Zerwas
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Bee Moorhead, Texas Impact; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Melody Chatelle, United Ways of Texas; Robert Pinhero, Texas Association of Non Profit Organizations; Andrew Rivas, Texas Catholic Conference)
- Against — None
- On — Liz Garbutt, Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- BACKGROUND:** HB 492 by Zerwas, enacted by the 81st Legislature in 2009, established partnerships between faith- and community-based organizations and state government by creating an Interagency Coordinating Group comprised of state agency employees serving as liaisons to those non-profit groups.
- DIGEST:** HB 1965 would expand the number of state agencies that assign a government liaison to work with faith- and community-based organizations to establish partnerships and serve on the Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG). These members would be appointed by the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission by October 1, 2011. Under the bill, the following state agencies would be added:
- the Office of the Governor;
 - the Department of Public Safety;
 - the Texas Department of Insurance;
 - the Public Utility Commission of Texas;
 - the Office of the Attorney General
 - the Department of Agriculture;
 - the Office of the Comptroller;
 - the Department of Information Resources;

- the Office of State-Federal Relations; and
- the Office of the Secretary of State.

The commissioner of higher education would confer with the chair of the ICG to designate an employee from an institution of higher education to serve as a liaison for faith- and community-based organizations.

HHSC would provide administrative support to the ICG. An employee of the State Commission on National and Community Service (commonly referred to as the OneStar Foundation) would assume the role of chair. If the OneStar Foundation were abolished, the liaison from the Governor's Office would become the chair of the group. The ICG would have to submit an annual report to the Legislature by December 1, providing details on the group's activities, goals, and progress.

HB 1965 also would establish a task force that included a representative from of a faith-based group, a community-based group, and local government, as well as a consultant to non-profit corporations, an expert in grant writing, a private donor to faith- and community-based organizations, and a member of the general public. The task force would be charged with directing the ICG in fulfilling the group's duties, including:

- developing and implementing a plan for improving contracting relationships between state agencies and faith- and community-based organizations;
- developing best practices for cooperating and collaborating with faith- and community-based organizations;
- identifying and addressing duplication of services provided by the state and faith- and community-based organizations; and
- identifying and addressing gaps in state services that faith- and community-based organizations could fill.

The task force would prepare a report providing updates on the progress made by the ICG and include any recommendations for necessary legislation to address issues identified by the ICG. The report would have to be presented to the House committees on Human Services and Public Health and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee by September 1, 2012. The task force would expire September 1, 2013.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1965 would improve existing relationships between state agencies and faith- and community-based organizations to maximize the impact of state services and improve outcomes for Texans. The tough economic times experienced by families, non-profits, and state agencies require greater cooperation between the non-profit sector and state services to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. The bill would build upon the great work in this area that resulted from HB 492 in 2009 and continue to strengthen the safety net for vulnerable Texans.

Innovative strategies are needed to grow the non-profit sector in Texas. Today, non-profits employ more than 400,000 Texans, inject nearly \$17 billion into the economy, and generate roughly \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes. While this sector has grown more than 40 percent over the last 15 years, the share of employment for non-profits in Texas lags behind the national average. This equates to a missed opportunity for job creation and providing better services. HB 1965 would improve partnerships between public and nonprofit agencies and programs, thus increasing the capacity of nonprofits in Texas to carry out their missions and serve their communities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1965 would place greater emphasis on the work of faith- and community-based organizations, which could divert attention away from the real problem, which is cuts to the state budget. While faith-based organizations and non-profits play a critical role in society, this bill could allow the state to evade its responsibility to vulnerable Texans by relying even more heavily on the charity sector.

HB 1965 could inadvertently promote one faith above another. With only one member of a faith-based organization on the task force, it could be perceived that the state of Texas preferred one religion over another. This could undermine citizens of other or no religious affiliation.