

- SUBJECT:** Reporting the cost of undocumented immigrants to state services
- COMMITTEE:** State Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Cook, Menendez, Craddick, Frullo, Harless, Hilderbran, Huberty, Solomons, Turner
- 0 nays
- 4 absent — Gallego, Geren, Oliveira, Smithee
- WITNESSES:** For — Maria Martinez, Immigration Reform Coalition of Texas
- Against — Andrew Rivas, Texas Catholic Conference; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Stefanie Collins, ACLU of Texas; Luis Figueroa, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; Esther Reyes, Reform Immigration for TX Alliance; Emily Shelton, Texas Impact; Antolin Aguirre; B.J. Lee; Jesus Mares; Maria Medina; Karla Resendiz; Dianna Tavera; Walter Trejo)
- On — Adrian Reyna, Texas DREAM Alliance
- DIGEST:** HB 608 would require each state agency to submit an annual report to the comptroller on the costs of services and benefits provided to undocumented immigrants by December 31 of each year. Each agency would have to determine the extent to which undocumented immigrants were served by it by considering the statements and other personal information provided by program recipients, or by using an aggregated statistical method if it was not practical to directly determine if each program recipient was an undocumented immigrant.
- The comptroller would have to compile this information and submit a biennial report to the Legislature on the estimated financial impact of undocumented immigrants on the state budget and economy. The report would have to use aggregated statistical data that did not contain personally identifiable information and could not violate any federal or state laws, including ones related to privacy.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2011, and would apply only to applications for services or benefits made on or after the effective date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 608 would provide Texans with reliable information about the financial impact of undocumented immigrants on the state. Speculation has driven the debate on this contentious issue, largely because quality data that accurately capture this information are lacking. Previous studies and agency reports have relied on estimates based on imprecise and dated federal and state information. HB 608 would authorize state agencies to compile datasets from application and enrollment forms and would provide the most reliable source of information available.

The bill would authorize the comptroller to compile the datasets from state agencies and complete a report on the financial impact of undocumented immigrants on the Texas budget for the Legislature each biennium. This would be an unbiased and impartial source of information that could be trusted by all interested parties.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 608 would burden state agencies with extra work without providing the resources necessary to carry out this mandate. The bill would require each state agency to collect data from program applications and other relevant information submitted for enrollment. As a result, agencies would have to redesign application forms, pay for additional staff or for an external contractor to collect the vast amounts of information, and perform other administrative duties to meet the bill's requirements. Most state agencies have begun and will continue to make significant reductions in staff, so it would be inappropriate to mandate such an expensive project for an academic exercise. Given that undocumented immigrants are prohibited by federal law from enrolling in the vast majority of social programs, including Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and food stamps, this legislation would represent an unnecessary imposition on state agencies.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 608 would fall short of providing the Legislature and public with credible information on the fiscal impact of undocumented immigrants, because it would focus only on the costs incurred by undocumented immigrants and would ignore the budgetary (e.g., tax revenue) and economic benefits. While the bill could clarify some questions driving this issue, it would be inappropriate for the state pay for and present a report that was unbalanced and focused only on the negative aspects of undocumented immigrants' financial impact. The bill would be improved

if the comptroller also was authorized to assess the financial benefits contributed by undocumented immigrants to the state budget and the economy.

Additionally, the bill would not assess the impact of undocumented immigrants on local communities, which might pay the greatest share of the costs. The bill also should permit the comptroller to provide information about the fiscal costs and benefits to local communities.