

- SUBJECT:** Requiring a study utilizing prenatal surgery to treat birth defects.
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Crownover, Naishtat, Blanco, S. Davis, Guerra, R. Miller, Sheffield, Zedler, Zerwas
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Coleman, Collier
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Heiwa Salovitz, Adapt of Texas; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Amy Tucker)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Rick Allgeyer, Health and Human Services Commission; John Seago, Texas Right to Life)
- BACKGROUND:** Health and Safety Code, sec. 87.001 defines a birth defect as a physical or mental functional deficit or impairment in a human embryo, fetus, or newborn resulting from one or more genetic or environmental causes.
- DIGEST:** HB 606 would require the Health and Human Services Commission to conduct a study evaluating the benefits of prenatal surgical procedures to treat birth defects. The procedures studied would include:
- fetoscopic placental laser ablation;
 - maternal-fetal surgery; and
 - any other type of prenatal surgical procedure that is or becomes the standard of practice for treating a birth defect.
- The study would analyze the difference in average total cost to Medicaid, private health insurance, individuals, and other payors between conducting a prenatal surgical procedure and a postnatal procedure to treat a birth defect, including any continuing treatments needed after either

procedure.

The study also would analyze any improvement in survival rates, long-term outcomes, and quality of life for children with birth defects following a prenatal surgical procedure, as compared to a postnatal procedure, to treat a birth defect.

On or before December 1, 2016, the commission would be required to submit a written report on the results of the study to the governor, lieutenant governor, House speaker, House Committee on Public Health, and Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.

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, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 606 would require a study on prenatal surgery that could help determine the most cost-effective and successful procedures for treating birth defects. Prenatal surgery has the potential to completely correct a debilitating, chronic health condition in utero, which could save many lives and also help the state save money on its Medicaid program.

The study primarily would focus on the first two procedures — fetoscopic placental laser ablation and maternal-fetal surgery — but is written to allow for some flexibility so advances in prenatal medical procedures and technology could be taken into account.

This bill could help enable life-saving treatment for fetal medical conditions once thought to be terminal and could give pregnant mothers hope and a chance to save their baby's life or improve the baby's quality of life.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The procedures to be studied under HB 606 could be too broadly defined. The bill would require the study of “any other types of prenatal surgical procedure that is or becomes the standard of practice for treating a birth defect,” and it is unclear how this standard would be measured.