

**SUBJECT:** Establishing a task force of border health officials

**COMMITTEE:** Human Services — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Raymond, Frank, Keough, Klick, Miller, Rose, Swanson, Wu  
0 nays  
1 absent — Minjarez

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 3 — 30-1 (Nelson)

**WITNESSES:** No public hearing

**BACKGROUND:** Concerned parties have suggested that collaboration between local and state health officials should be strengthened to maximize local resources and address the unique challenges of addressing the health care needs of the border region.

**DIGEST:** SB 1680 would add a new chapter to the Health and Safety Code to establish and govern a task force of border health officials.

**Task force duties.** The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) would establish the Task Force of Border Health Officials to advise the commissioner of state health services on policy priorities addressing major issues affecting border region residents' health and increasing awareness of health issues impacting the border region, including:

- barriers to accessing health care;
- specific health problems affecting the region;
- surveillance and tracking of factors negatively influencing health;
- standardization of health data to ensure compatibility with data collected by border states on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border;
- public health infrastructure that included education and research institutions;

- establishment of local and regional public health programs that maximized the use of public funds to address the needs of the indigent population; and
- collaboration and cooperation with Mexican counterparts at the state and federal level and collaboration with federal U.S. counterparts.

**Border health improvement plans.** By November 1 of each even-numbered year, the task force would submit a report to the commissioner with recommendations for short- and long-term border health improvement plans. The short-term plan would have to identify health objectives proposed to be accomplished within four years. The long-term plan would identify those to be accomplished within nine years. The initial short- and long-term plans would have to include initiatives to be implemented by September 1, 2018, and September 1, 2020, respectively.

The commissioner would recommend short- and long-term plans to the Health and Human Services (HHSC) executive commissioner, who would direct DSHS to implement the portions of the plans that could be accomplished under existing law. DSHS would have to implement the initiatives in the initial short- and long-term plans by September 1, 2022, and September 1, 2027, respectively.

By September 1 of each even-numbered year, the HHSC executive commissioner would submit a report detailing actions taken by the task force that included the status of all projects, the funding for expenditures, and recommendations for necessary legislation.

**Composition.** The task force would be composed of the following members to be appointed by October 1, 2017:

- the local health department directors from each county in the border region and each municipality in the border region that had a sister city in Mexico;
- two ex officio nonvoting members from the Legislature who would serve three-year terms, with one each appointed by the lieutenant

- governor and the House speaker; and
- additional members appointed by the commissioner.

Members would not be entitled to compensation or reimbursement.

DSHS's Office of Border Health would provide staff support and any other assistance as needed to the task force.

**Meetings.** The task force would meet at least quarterly each fiscal year. Meetings could be held by conference calls and through video conference. The task force would be exempt from certain requirements for meetings held by conference call under open meetings laws.

**Applicability of current law.** The task force would be subject to the Texas Sunset Act and would be abolished on September 1, 2029, unless continued in statute.

Laws regulating state agency advisory committees would not apply to the task force.

**Effective date.** This 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, 2017.