

**SUBJECT:** Codifying the Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 10 ayes — S. Thompson, Wray, Allison, Coleman, Frank, Guerra, Ortega, Price, Sheffield, Zedler

0 nays

1 absent — Lucio

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Cynthia Humphrey, Association of Substance Abuse Programs; Jacquie Benestante, Autism Society of Texas; Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Brenda Koegler, League of Women Voters of Texas; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas Inc.; Greg Hansch and Alissa Sughrue, National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children; Lee Johnson, Texas Council of Community Centers; Sara Gonzalez, Texas Hospital Association; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Don McBeath, Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Kevin Stewart, Texas Psychological Association; Merily Keller, Texas Suicide Prevention Council; Kaitlin Street, TexProtects; Nataly Saucedo, United Ways of Texas; Knox Kimberly, Upbring)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Gregory Young)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Carissa Dougherty, Health and Human Services Commission)

**BACKGROUND:** HB 1 by Otto, the general appropriations act for fiscal 2016-17, in 2015 created the Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council, which is made up of state agencies that were appropriated funds for mental and behavioral health services. The main objectives of the council are to develop a statewide five-year strategic plan for mental and

behavioral health and to create a statewide expenditure proposal. The council was continued by the 85th Legislature through SB 1 by Nelson, the general appropriations act for fiscal 2018-19.

DIGEST:

HB 2813 would establish the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council to ensure a continuing strategic statewide approach to behavioral health services. The council would include at least one representative designated by each of the following entities:

- the Office of the Governor;
- the Texas Veterans Commission;
- the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC);
- the Department of State Health Services;
- the Department of Family and Protective Services;
- the Texas Civil Commitment Office;
- the UT Health Science Center at Houston;
- the UT Health Science Center at Tyler;
- the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center;
- the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;
- the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments;
- the Commission on Jail Standards;
- the Texas Indigent Defense Commission;
- the court of criminal appeals;
- the Texas Juvenile Justice Department;
- the Texas Military Department;
- the Texas Education Agency;
- the Texas Workforce Commission;
- the Health Professions Council, including representatives specified by the bill; and
- the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

The executive commissioner of HHSC would have to determine the number of representatives that each entity could designate to serve on the council. The council could authorize another state agency or institution

that provided specific behavioral health services with the use of appropriated money to designate a representative to the council. Council members would serve at the pleasure of the designating entity.

The mental health statewide coordinator would serve as the presiding officer of the council.

The council would have to meet at least once quarterly or more frequently at the call of the presiding officer. The council would have to develop and monitor the implementation of a five-year statewide behavioral health strategic plan and would develop a biennial coordinated statewide behavioral health expenditure proposal. The council could create subcommittees to carry out its duties and could oversee the administration of state and federal funding, including grants, involving behavioral and mental health in Texas.

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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 2813 would ensure the continued existence of the Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Council by codifying it in statute. By removing the need to continue the council through the general appropriations act, this bill would ensure that the council continued to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to mental and behavioral health services and the treatment of substance use disorders where funds have been appropriated.

The bill would not create bureaucratic redundancy because it would simply codify an already existing council. The council helps state agencies coordinate and reduces duplication of services, thereby saving taxpayer money and improving the quality of services provided.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

HB 2813 could create bureaucratic redundancy by continuing the Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Council in statute. Relevant state agencies already coordinate mental and behavioral health strategies and do not need

another layer of administrative oversight.