

SUBJECT: Creating a trafficked persons grant program for children, youths

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Frank, Hinojosa, Hull, Klick, Meza, Neave, Noble, Shaheen

0 nays

1 absent — Rose

WITNESSES: For — Linda Nuno, Dem District Chair #268; Kelly Barron, Harris County Juvenile Probation Department; Emilee Whitehurst, Houston Area Women’s Center; Dennis Mark, Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance; James Dixon and Frances Meyers, No Trafficking Zone; Jacquelyn Aluotto, RBRW/Break The Cycle USA; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jim Pitts, Baylor Scott White; Jamey Caruthers, Children at Risk; Justin Wood, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas; Stacy Wilson, Children's Hospital Association of Texas; M. Paige Williams, for Dallas Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot; Gregg Knaupe, Dell Children’s Medical Center; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Thamara Narvaez, Harris County Commissioners Court; Jessica Anderson, Houston Police Department; Annalee Gulley, Mental Health America of Greater Houston; Maggie Luna, Statewide Leadership Council; Leonard Aguilar, Texas AFL-CIO; Jamie McCormick, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Shannon Jaquette, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Olivia Chriss, Texas Childrens Hospital; Dan Finch, Texas Medical Association; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA; Molly Weiner, United Ways of Texas; Knox Kimberly, Upbring; and six individuals)

Against — None

On — Steve Glazier and Meaghan Lightbody-Warner, UTHealth Houston (*Registered, but did not testify:* Blanca Denise Lance, Department of Family and Protective Services; Crystal Starkey, Health And Human Services Commission; Nickie Yee, Secretary of State)

BACKGROUND: Concerns have been raised that Texas does not have standalone facilities for the recovery and protection of children, youths, and young adults who are victims of human trafficking.

DIGEST: CSHB 2633 would establish the trafficked persons grant program to give grants to applicants to provide dedicated housing and treatment facilities for certain human trafficking victims. The bill would establish an account to fund the grant program and establish provisions for making and administering the grants.

Trafficked persons program account. The purpose of the trafficked persons program account would be to provide money:

- to substantiate the state's interest in publicly operated and funded shelter and treatment for victims of certain offenses related to human trafficking;
- to prevent the recruitment of human trafficking victims within mixed-status child, youth, and young adult shelters;
- for consistent and recurring funding of long-term solutions for treatment and safe and secure shelter to child, youth, and young adult victims of human trafficking;
- for financial stability of local governments, private partners, and medical facilities in planning, building, and maintaining dedicated housing and recovery programs for victims of human trafficking; and
- to raise awareness of the account among businesses and philanthropists and to strengthen public and private partnerships established to end the practice of human trafficking.

The bill would establish the trafficked persons program account as a dedicated account in the general revenue fund. The account would consist of contributions made under provisions in the bill; fees for the specialty license plates established under the bill; gifts, grants, and donations; and interest, dividends, and other income. Requirements that interest on certain accounts be available as general revenue would not apply to the

new fund.

Money in the account could be appropriated only to:

- the grant program;
- the sex trafficking prevention and victim treatment programs established under the bill;
- a trafficked persons program established by a juvenile board under the Family Code; and
- the administration of programs under the Family Code that would be established by the bill for children and youths who were victims of human trafficking.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) would administer the account and establish guidelines for distributing money from the account. The commission would be required to distribute money from the account to the grant program until the commission determined that the grant program's purposes were satisfied. After that, the commission could distribute money from the account to other programs listed in the bill.

Trafficked persons grant program. The commission would have to establish the trafficked persons grant program to provide grants to applicants for dedicated housing and treatment facilities provided to human trafficking victims.

The commission would have to develop eligibility criteria for the grant program applicants and require them to provide specific types of support, services, and shelter. A grant applicant would have to provide to the commission plans that included specific items, including information on their strategy for addressing the needs of human trafficking victims and a statement on the applicant's provision of shelter, services, and treatment.

When awarding grants, the bill would require the commission to prioritize applicants that met certain criteria in the bill. CSHB 2633 also would establish requirements for contracts with grant recipients, including requiring recipients to repay the grant if they did not comply with the

standards and rules established under the bill and prohibiting the use of grant funds for administrative or overhead expenses.

The HHSC could distribute money from the account to itself to provide services described by the bill if the commission determined it had the resources and personnel necessary to provide those services.

The HHSC would be authorized to use funds appropriated from the trafficked persons program account to establish, maintain, and operate facilities to provide care and to ensure the general well-being of children and youth who were victims of a human trafficking offense.

Contributions to the account. The bill would amend several statutes to give individuals the opportunity to contribute to the trafficked persons program account.

The Department of Information Resources (DIR) would have to provide an opportunity for individuals accessing the state internet portal to submit a payment to the state to make a contribution to the account. DIR would be required to collaborate with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Public Safety, and any other state agency to maximize donations to the account.

The Texas Department of Motor vehicles would be required to direct individuals registering or renewing motor vehicle registrations to the opportunity to donate to the account and to issue specialty license plates to support the account.

The Department of Public Safety would have to direct individuals applying for driver's licenses or identification cards and those applying for commercial driver's licenses to the opportunity to donate to the trafficked persons program account.

The secretary of state would be required to inform the public of the opportunity to support the account.

Study. HHSC would be required to use funds appropriated to it from the account to conduct a study to determine the needs and best practices of establishing permanent, safe, and secure housing for child and youth victims of human trafficking offenses. HHSC would have to report on the study to the governor and certain legislative committees by December 1, 2022.

Other provisions. Other provisions in the bill include ones:

- expanding the goals of the secretary state's human trafficking prevention business partnership to include informing participating corporations and other private entities of the opportunity to support the trafficked persons program account; and
- expanding who could be served by a juvenile board's trafficked person's program and allowing these facilities to apply for grants established under the bill to provide certain shelter and treatment services to human trafficking victims.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a \$700,000 negative impact to general revenue related funds through the fiscal 2022-23 biennium.