

SUBJECT: Allowing certain districts to provide preventative health services

COMMITTEE: County Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Coleman, Stucky, Anderson, Cason, Longoria, Lopez, Spiller, Stephenson, J. Turner

WITNESSES: For — Mark Jack, SAFE-D and Parker County ESD 1; John Carlton, Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts; Nick Perkins, Travis County ESD 2

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Russell Schaffner, Tarrant County; Julie Wheeler, Travis County Commissioners Court)

BACKGROUND: Health and Safety Code ch. 775 governs emergency services districts, which are granted powers and duties to provide emergency services. It has been suggested that these districts should be authorized to implement mobile integrated health care community paramedicine programs to help reduce district costs and improve health care for at-risk individuals.

DIGEST: CSHB 639 would authorize emergency service districts, if approved by the commissioners court of each county in which the district was located, to provide preventative health care services to reduce reliance on 9-1-1 transports and systems for routine healthcare. Districts could contract with the state or a local government to provide those services and could charge a reasonable fee for performing such services for or on behalf of a person or entity.

The bill would apply to an emergency services district that was licensed as or contracted with an emergency medical service provider or a first responder organization as defined by the Health and Safety Code. A district in a county with a population of less than 60,000 would be required to obtain approval from the county commissioners court prior to providing preventative public health services.

For the purposes of the bill, “preventative health care services” would be defined as out-of-hospital routine health care services, including immunizations, screenings, checkups, and patient counseling, provided for the purpose of preventing illness, disease, or other health problems.

Districts could make necessary improvements and adopt rules and regulations to comply with the bill’s provisions.

The bill also would establish that further reference in Health and Safety Code ch. 775 to the district providing emergency services would include preventative health care 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, 2021.