

SUBJECT: Creating the Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute at UTHealth Houston

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, P. King, Ortega, Parker, Raney, C.
Turner, J. Turner

0 nays

2 absent — Frullo, Muñoz

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 21 — 28-3 (Hughes, Paxton, Springer)

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Gilbert Zavala, The Greater Austin
Chamber of Commerce; Robert Norris)

Against — None

On — Eric Boerwinkle, UTHealth Houston

BACKGROUND: Interested parties have called for the state to better protect public health
and support pandemic and epidemic preparedness measures.

DIGEST: SB 1780 would require the board of regents of The University of Texas
System to establish and maintain the Texas Epidemic Public Health
Institute at the UT Health Science Center at Houston.

The institute would have to establish and maintain a public health reserve
network of public health professionals, community health workers, state
and local public health agencies, health care organizations, universities
throughout the state, and other relevant entities and persons for the
purpose of coordinating efforts to protect public health in Texas and
support pandemic and epidemic disaster preparedness and response
components of the state emergency management plan.

The administration of the institute would be under the direction of the

chancellor of The University of Texas System and the board of regents through the president of the health science center.

The Department of State Health Services would have to provide the institute with access to relevant and timely data necessary for the institute to perform its duties.

The institute could accept gifts, grants, and donations from any source for the purposes of the institute.

The institute biennially would have to commission an independent financial audit of its activities from a certified public accounting firm. The institute would be required to provide the audit to the comptroller, and the comptroller would have to review and evaluate the audit and biennially issue a public report of that review.

The board of regents of The University of Texas System would have to implement a provision of the bill only if the Legislature appropriated money specifically for that purpose. If the Legislature did not appropriate money, the board could, but would not be required to, implement the provision using other money available to the board for that purpose.

The bill also would authorize the state emergency management plan prepared by the Texas Division of Emergency Management to include provisions for protecting public health.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of about \$59.1 million to general revenue through fiscal 2023.