

SUBJECT: Revising provisions related to health plan coverage of autism services

COMMITTEE: Insurance — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Oliverson, A. Johnson, Caroline Harris, Hull, Julie Johnson, Paul, Perez

0 nays

2 absent — Cain, Cortez

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jacquie Benestante, Autism Society of Texas; Jim Arnold, Autism Speaks; Stacy Wilson, Children’s Hospital Association of Texas; Lindsay Lanagan, Legacy Community Health; David Reynolds, Texas Chapter American College of Physicians' Services; Isabel Casas, Texas Council of Community Centers; Ben Wright, Texas Medical Association; Jill Sutton, Texas Osteopathic Medical Assn; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Mariel Fernandez, TxABA PPG, Blue Sprig Pediatrics; and 15 individuals)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Annie Spilman, NFIB)

On — Blake Hutson, Texas Association of Health Plans (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rachel Bowden, Texas Department of Insurance)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that health plans and providers would benefit from an updated statutory definition of an autism spectrum disorder and of health plan responsibilities when covering enrollees with the disorder.

DIGEST: CSHB 4506 would revise provisions related to health benefit plan coverage for treatment of autism. The definition of an autism spectrum disorder would be revised to:

- a neurological disorder or developmental disability that significantly affected verbal communication, nonverbal

communication, and social interaction and met certain diagnostic criteria; or

- a diagnosis made using previous diagnostic criteria related to autism, Asperger's syndrome, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified.

The bill would remove provisions that provided covered services only to enrollees who had been diagnosed with the disorder prior to the age of ten. Provisions that capped annual coverage for applied behavior analysis to \$36,000 for an enrollee ten years of age or older also would be removed.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023 and would apply only to a health benefit plan that was delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed on or after January 1, 2024.