

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
84R1353 JAM-D

S.B. 32  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The Texas Legislature authorized the creation of colonia self-help centers (SHCs) in 1995. Specifically, it directed the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) to establish at least five colonia SHCs in counties near the Texas-Mexico border where colonias are prevalent.

The authorizing legislation charged SHCs with offering housing assistance to colonia residents. Seven SHCs currently are in operation and offer a variety of services aimed at helping colonia residents improve their housing conditions. SHC program administrators report significant success in helping persons and families in colonias to finance and implement housing improvements. Between 2008 and 2013, SHCs provided home repair or home ownership services to 1,584 families.

Still, the majority of colonia residents have income levels significantly below the federal poverty line. Despite receiving assistance to improve and stabilize their housing situations, colonia residents face barriers to improving their economic situations, including lack of access to capital and educational opportunities. SHCs, having been present in border counties for nearly 20 years, are in a unique position to offer services related to improving economic opportunity among colonia residents.

Specifically, SHC program administrators have expressed the desire to offer services that would assist colonia residents with securing employment, establishing and growing small businesses, and managing personal finances. While such activities are allowable under the federal funding source supporting SHC activities, current state law only authorizes the SHCs to provide housing-related services. S.B. 32 expands the scope of allowable services offered by colonia self-help centers to include economic development-related services.

As proposed, S.B. 32 amends current law relating to the services provided by a colonia self-help center.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Sections 2306.586(a), (b), (c), and (d), Government Code, as follows:

- (a) Provides that the purpose of a self-help center is, in addition to existing purposes in this subsection, to otherwise improve living conditions in the colonias' designated service area or in another area the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has determined is suitable.

(b) Requires a self-help center to set a goal to improve the living conditions of residents in the colonias designated under Section 2306.583(b) (relating to the designation of colonias to receive concentrated attention), rather than 2306.583(a)(2), within a two-year period after a contract is awarded under this subchapter.

(c-9) Authorizes a self-help center to serve individuals and families of low income and very low income by, in addition to previously stated services, providing additional services that the self-help center, with the approval of TDHCA, determines are necessary to assist colonia residents in improving their living conditions, including help in securing employment, establishing or expanding small businesses, managing personal finances, or obtaining suitable alternative housing outside of a colonia's area.

(d) Prohibits a self-help center, in addition to the established list in this subsection, from otherwise improve living conditions in a colonia if water service and suitable wastewater disposal are not available.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2015.