

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 922
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Health & Human Services
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Schools are recognized as Medicaid providers and required by federal law to identify and provide certain services for special needs children such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and certain counseling services. In many parts of the state, especially in rural areas, there are a limited number of professionals who are able to provide school districts with these necessary therapy services. As such, school districts in shortage areas are often required to spend significant tax dollars to contract with providers from other areas to deliver therapy services. S.B. 922 addresses this issue by permitting telehealth technology in school-based settings. In addition to reducing the financial burden on school districts, S.B. 922 helps ensure special needs students living in rural or underserved areas have increased accessibility to the essential therapy services they need to thrive.

In 2015, the Texas Legislature took action to improve access to healthcare for children in underserved areas by allowing the use of telemedicine in a school-based setting with the passage of H.B. 1878. S.B. 922 expands this provision to allow for Medicaid reimbursement of certain therapy services administered through telehealth technology in a school-based setting. S.B. 922 stipulates that only health professionals acting within their practice may provide telehealth services. It also requires consent from a parent or guardian and the presence of an onsite health professional when telehealth therapy services are provided.

As proposed, S.B. 922 amends current law relating to the reimbursement of certain providers under the Medicaid program for the provision of telehealth services.

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 Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, by adding Section 531.02171, as follows:

Sec. 531.02171. REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTAIN TELEHEALTH SERVICES. (a) Defines "health professional."

(b) Requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to ensure that Medicaid reimbursement is provided to a school district or open-enrollment charter school for telehealth services provided through the school district or charter school by a health professional, even if the health professional is not the patient's primary care physician or provider, if:

(1) the school district or charter school is an authorized health care provider under Medicaid;

(2) the parent or legal guardian of the patient provides consent before the service is provided; and

(3) another health professional is present with the patient during the provision of the service.

SECTION 2. Requires a state agency, if necessary for implementation of a provision of this Act, to request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency, and authorizes delay of implementation until such a waiver or authorization is granted.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2017.