

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 239
By: Powell
Health & Human Services
5/28/2021
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Background: Texas has had nearly 300 declared disasters since 1996. These disasters strain our infrastructure and may leave people stranded from their homes without proper hygiene and in close confinement to each other in shelters or in rebuilding. This puts people at high risk for contracting communicable diseases as well as derailing them from normal vaccination and healthcare check-ups. This is especially true for those in underserved areas, like in urban, rural, and communities of color.

COVID-19 is one of the most recent examples of this. Our healthcare infrastructure is still strained, and we saw our most vulnerable and underserved communities hit the hardest from this communicable disease. When vaccine rollouts occurred in December, there were many obstacles to disseminating clear and consistent information. It is important that we establish plans that not only ensure our recovery from this pandemic, but also establish systems that will be long lasting for disasters to come.

S.B. 239 amends current law relating to the provision of educational materials regarding disease prevention during a disaster.

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 H, Chapter 418, Government Code, by adding Section 418.1861, as follows:

Sec. 418.1861. DISEASE PREVENTION INFORMATION SYSTEM. (a) Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), using existing resources, to develop and implement a disease prevention information system for dissemination of immunization information during a declared state of disaster or local state of disaster.

(b) Requires DSHS, during a declared state of disaster or local state of disaster, to ensure that educational materials regarding immunizations are available to local health authorities in Texas for distribution to:

- (1) public and private schools;
- (2) child-care facilities as defined by Section 42.002 (Definitions), Human Resources Code;
- (3) community centers offering youth services and programs;
- (4) community centers offering services and programs to vulnerable populations, including communities of color, low-income individuals, and elderly individuals;

(5) local health care providers; and

(6) veterans homes as defined by Section 164.002 (Definitions), Natural Resources Code.

(c) Requires that the educational materials include the most recent immunization schedules by age as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and locations, if any, of local health care providers that offer immunizations.

SECTION 2. Requires DSHS, as soon as practicable, but not later than August 31, 2022, to implement the disease prevention information system as required by Section 418.1861, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2021.