

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 844
By: Patterson et al. (Paxton)
Criminal Justice
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, a third party must be involved for an injured person to be considered a victim of commercial sexual exploitation under Texas law. This places a burden on the victim to identify another individual who may be unknown or conversely linked closely to the victim. Victims, law enforcement, and social service providers have reported that victims may be unable or unwilling to identify their traffickers due to the bond that such victims sometimes develop with their traffickers or to the fact that exploitation has occurred for such an extended period of time that minors no longer identify as victims themselves. Traffickers and buyers will also target minors who may be in financial or emotionally vulnerable positions in order for exploitation to be less apparent to the victims.

H.B. 844 seeks to address these issues by removing the necessity of third-party identification for a person to be considered a victim of human trafficking.

H.B. 844 amends current law relating to crime victims' compensation for criminally injurious conduct in connection with trafficking of persons.

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 A, Chapter 56B, Code of Criminal Procedure, by adding Article 56B.0035, as follows:

Art. 56B.0035. CRIMINALLY INJURIOUS CONDUCT. (a) Provides that criminally injurious conduct, for purposes of Chapter 56B (Crime Victims' Compensation), includes the solicitation or patronization of forced labor or services, including sexual conduct, by any person if the solicitation or patronization occurs in connection with a scheme or course of conduct that constitutes the trafficking of persons.

(b) Provides that a victim of criminally injurious conduct described by Subsection (a) is a trafficking victim for the purposes of grant programs administered by the office of the governor.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2023.