

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3726
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that when veterans return home they have to combat emotional and physical issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, making it difficult to return to a normal civilian life. Unfortunately, drugs and alcohol are often used as coping mechanisms for those issues, and many of the veterans who enter the criminal justice system deal with prescription drug or substance abuse issues. C.S.H.B. 3726 seeks to help rehabilitate these veterans and aid in their transition out of incarceration.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3726 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to establish a veterans services coordinator to coordinate responses to the needs of veterans under the supervision of TDCJ, including veterans who are released on parole or mandatory supervision. The bill requires the coordinator, with the cooperation of the community justice assistance division of TDCJ, to provide information to community supervision and corrections departments to help those departments coordinate responses to the needs of veterans placed on community supervision. The bill requires the coordinator to coordinate veterans' services for all of TDCJ's divisions and, in collaboration with the attorney general's office, to provide each incarcerated veteran a child support modification application.

C.S.H.B. 3726 requires TDCJ to establish a voluntary rehabilitation and transition program for defendants confined in state jail felony facilities who are veterans of the U.S. armed forces and who suffer from a brain injury, a mental illness, a mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or substance abuse that occurred during or resulted from the veteran's military service and may have contributed to their criminal activity. The bill requires the program to house defendants participating in the program in housing designed to mimic the squadron structure familiar to veterans; to provide rehabilitation programming in developing healthy relationships, anger management techniques, and substance abuse treatment; and, to the extent feasible and not later than the 30th day before the date a defendant participating in the program is released or discharged from TDCJ, to match the defendant with a veteran peer coordinator who is certified as a peer services provider through the Military Veteran Peer Network for assisting the defendant in transitioning into the community and to transfer the defendant to a state jail facility located near the defendant's home community or the community in which the defendant

intends to reside after the defendant's release or discharge to begin establishing transition relationships with the veteran peer coordinator and family members.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3726 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 501, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 501.0961 to read as follows:

Sec. 501.0961. VETERANS REENTRY DORM PROGRAM.

(a) The department shall establish a voluntary reentry and reintegration program for offenders:

(1) who are veterans of the United States armed forces, including veterans of the reserves, national guard, or state guard; and

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 501, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 501.025 to read as follows:

Sec. 501.025. VETERANS SERVICES COORDINATOR. (a) The department shall establish a veterans services coordinator to coordinate responses to the needs of veterans under the supervision of the department, including veterans who are released on parole or mandatory supervision. The veterans services coordinator, with the cooperation of the community justice assistance division, shall provide information to community supervision and corrections departments to help those departments coordinate responses to the needs of veterans placed on community supervision. The veterans services coordinator shall coordinate veterans' services for all of the department's divisions.

(b) The veterans services coordinator, in collaboration with the attorney general's office, shall provide each incarcerated veteran a child support modification application.

SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 507, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 507.034 to read as follows:

Sec. 507.034. VETERANS REHABILITATION DORM PROGRAM.

(a) The department shall establish a voluntary rehabilitation and transition program for defendants confined in state jail felony facilities:

(1) who are veterans of the United States armed forces, including veterans of the reserves, national guard, or state guard; and

(2) who suffer from a brain injury, mental illness, or mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, that:

(A) occurred during or resulted from their military service; and

(B) may have contributed to their criminal activity.

(b) The program must:

(1) house offenders participating in the program in housing that is designed to mimic the squadron structure familiar to veterans;

(2) provide rehabilitation programming in developing healthy relationships, anger management techniques, and substance abuse treatment; and

(3) before releasing or discharging an offender participating in the program from the department, match the offender with a veteran peer coordinator to assist the offender in reintegrating into the community.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2015.

(2) who suffer from a brain injury, a mental illness, a mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or substance abuse that:

(A) occurred during or resulted from their military service; and

(B) may have contributed to their criminal activity.

(b) The program must:

(1) house defendants participating in the program in housing that is designed to mimic the squadron structure familiar to veterans;

(2) provide rehabilitation programming in developing healthy relationships, anger management techniques, and substance abuse treatment; and

(3) to the extent feasible, not later than the 30th day before the date a defendant participating in the program is released or discharged from the department:

(A) match the defendant with a veteran peer coordinator who is certified as a peer services provider through the Military Veteran Peer Network to assist the defendant in transitioning into the community; and

(B) transfer the defendant to a state jail facility located near the defendant's home community or the community in which the defendant intends to reside after the defendant's release or discharge, to begin establishing transition relationships with the veteran peer coordinator and family members.

SECTION 3. Same as introduced version.