

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 323
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Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised nationwide regarding the accountability and performance of law enforcement agencies. There have been calls to incentivize more law enforcement agencies in Texas to seek accreditation through entities such as the Texas Police Chiefs Association Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program by establishing a grant program. Investing in law enforcement agencies through a grant program will help to professionalize the industry, create an environment that fosters better communication between local governments and law enforcement agencies, and ensure the highest standard of excellence in law enforcement. H.B. 323 seeks to address this issue by creating a grant program to provide financial assistance to law enforcement agencies in Texas for certain accreditation purposes.

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

H.B. 323 amends the Government Code to require the criminal justice division of the governor's office to establish and administer a grant program to provide financial assistance to a law enforcement agency in Texas for the following purposes:

- obtaining or maintaining recognition through the Texas Police Chiefs Association Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program; or
- becoming accredited or maintaining accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., or another association or organization designated as an accrediting agency by the division and the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) in the manner established by the bill.

The bill caps the amount of a grant at \$50,000 and authorizes the division to use any available revenue for the grant program.

H.B. 323 requires the division to do the following:

- establish eligibility criteria for grant applicants, guidelines relating to grant amounts, and certain procedures relating to grant applications and the administration of the grant program; and
- submit a report to the Legislative Budget Board, not later than December 1 of each year, that provides for the preceding state fiscal year the name of each law enforcement agency that applied for a grant and the amount of money distributed to each agency that received a grant.

The bill requires the division, with TCOLE's assistance, to periodically review associations and organizations that establish standards of practice for law enforcement agencies and that offer accreditation to agencies that meet those standards, and authorizes TCOLE to designate those associations or organizations as accrediting agencies for the bill's purposes on the division's determination that their accreditation of law enforcement agencies in Texas would benefit public safety.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.