

- SUBJECT:** Adding victim's advocate to community justice task forces
- COMMITTEE:** Corrections — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Hightower, Gray, Farrar, Longoria, Pitts, Telford
0 nays
3 absent — Allen, Culberson, Serna
- WITNESSES:** For — Natacha Peláez-Wagner, Travis County Community Justice Council
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Community justice councils are established by district judges in judicial districts to provide guidance and direction for community justice corrections facilities and programs and community justice plans. Community justice plans are required in order for a local community supervision and corrections (probation) department to receive state aid for adult probation programs. The councils are composed of sheriffs, county commissioners, county judges, city council members, legislators, judges, county attorneys, district or criminal district attorneys and an elected member of an independent school district board of trustees.
- Community justice councils are required to appoint a community justice task force to provide support staff for the development of the community justice plans. Task forces may have any number of members but, under Code of Criminal Procedure art. 42.131, should include 15 specified members including a chief of police, school superintendent, a substance abuse treatment professional, representatives of state agencies, a representative of a community service organization, a criminal law attorney and a defendants' rights representative.
- DIGEST:** HB 592 would add a victim's rights advocate to the list of persons that should be included on community justice task forces. The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two thirds of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 592 would put into law a recommendation, not a requirement, that community justice task forces include a crime victim's advocate. This would ensure that all points of view are represented when developing community justice plans. Community justice task forces provide staff support in the way of analysis, studies and recommendations to community justice councils, but do not have any decision-making authority. The task forces already include a defendant's rights representative, and including a victim's rights representative would ensure that the councils have fair, balanced information to make decisions about community justice plans and community supervision facilities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 961 by Barrientos, has been referred to the Senate Criminal Justice Committee