

SUBJECT: Travel expense reimbursement for Guardianship Certification Board

COMMITTEE: Judiciary — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Hartnett, Homer, Gonzales, Goolsby, Krusee

0 nays

4 absent — Hopson, Alonzo, R. Cook, Hughes

WITNESSES: For —Garth Corbett, Guardianship Certification Board

Against — None

On —Katie Bond, Office of Court Administration and Guardianship Certification Board

BACKGROUND: The 15-member Guardianship Certification Board was established by the 79th Legislature in 2005 within the Office of Court Administration (OCA) to certify and set minimum standards for non-volunteer guardianship services. Government Code, sec. 111.011(g) provides that board members serve without compensation or reimbursement for expenses.

DIGEST: HB 1485 would amend Government Code, sec. 111.011(g) to allow reimbursement of members of the Guardianship Certification Board for travel expenses and other actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official board duties. OCA would be required to use appropriated funds to reimburse the board members for these expenses.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 1485 would help the Guardianship Certification Board perform its important duties around the state by reimbursing board members for travel and other necessary expenses. The board meets quarterly, and some of its 15 members must fly to Austin from distant parts of the state, such as El Paso. Under these conditions, it is difficult to find individuals willing to serve voluntarily without reimbursing their travel-related expenses. The

bill would allow the board to recruit and retain qualified members from across Texas.

The Guardianship Certification Board works to certify guardians to ensure the best interests of wards of the state. According to the Legislative Budget Board, OCA's annual reimbursement expenses to board members would total \$14,000, an increase of only 18 percent above the board's current budget of \$76,728. This would not stretch OCA's annual budget and would be a small price to pay to further the board's good work.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 507 by Uresti, passed the Senate by 30-0 on March 29 and was reported favorably, without amendment, by the House Judiciary Committee on April 5 and recommended for the Local and Consent Calendars Committee, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 1485. The Judiciary Committee originally had recommended that HB 1485 be sent to the Local and Consent Calendars Committee, which transferred it to the Calendars Committee.