

- SUBJECT:** Revising prenatal syphilis testing requirements
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Crownover, Naishtat, Coleman, S. Davis, Guerra, R. Miller, Sheffield, Zedler, Zerwas
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Blanco, Collier
- WITNESSES:** For — Thomas Schlenker, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Lindsay Lanagan, City of Houston; Eileen Garcia, Texans Care for Children; Jennifer Smith, Texas Association of City and County Health Officials; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Andrew Smith, University Health System)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Sydney Minnerly, Department of State Health Services)
- BACKGROUND:** Health and Safety Code, sec. 81.090 establishes requirements for diagnostic testing during pregnancy and after a child’s birth. Current law requires that every pregnant woman in Texas be tested for syphilis at her first prenatal visit and at delivery. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that in communities where rates of congenital syphilis are high, pregnant women also should be tested for syphilis in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- DIGEST:** HB 2906 would revise the times at which pregnant women would have to be tested for syphilis. In addition to the currently required test at the first prenatal exam or visit, women would have to be tested in the third trimester. The current requirement for testing at delivery would be eliminated unless results from a third-trimester test were not in a woman's medical records.

If the woman's medical records at delivery did not include results from a third-trimester syphilis test, the physician or other person in attendance would be required to take a sample and have the test performed. If the woman's records did not include results from a third-trimester test and a test was not performed before delivery, the physician or other person in attendance would have to take sample from the newborn within two hours of birth and have it tested.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2015, and would apply only to samples submitted on or after that date.

NOTES:

The author plans to offer a floor amendment that would make several changes, including:

- prohibiting the test performed in the third trimester from being performed earlier than the 28th week of pregnancy;
- making a person responsible for the newborn child, instead of a person in attendance at the birth, one of those who can order the test for the newborn; and
- requiring the Department of State Health Services to report by January 1 of odd-numbered years to the Legislature on the number of cases of early congenital syphilis and late congenital syphilis that were diagnosed in the preceding biennium.