

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
78R7553 MCK-D

S.B. 858  
By: Madla  
Intergovernmental Relations  
3/19/2003  
As Filed

### **DIGEST AND PURPOSE**

Currently, studies show that physicians in rural areas are unable to leave their practices because of the lack of other physicians to provide coverage. Additionally, studies indicate that rural physicians work longer hours, see more patients, treat a higher percentage of indigent care patients, and receive less compensation than their urban colleagues. As proposed, S.B. 858 requires the Office of Rural and Community Affairs to instigate a state-supported rural physician relief program to help rural areas retain physicians.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 487, Government Code, by adding Subchapter N, as follows:

#### **SUBCHAPTER N. RURAL PHYSICIAN RELIEF PROGRAM**

Sec. 487.601. DEFINITIONS. Defines “physician,” “relief services,” and “rural.”

Sec. 487.602. RURAL PHYSICIAN RELIEF PROGRAM. Requires the Office of Rural and Community Affairs (ORCA) to create a program to provide affordable relief services to rural physicians practicing in the fields of general family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics to facilitate the ability of those physicians to take time away from their practice.

Sec. 487.603. FEES. (a) Requires ORCA to charge a fee for rural physicians to participate in the program.

(b) Requires the fees collected under this section to be deposited in a special account in the general revenue fund that may be appropriated only to ORCA for administration of this subchapter.

Sec. 487.604. FUNDING. Authorizes ORCA to solicit and accept gifts, grants, donations, and contributions to support the program.

Sec. 487.605. RELIEF PHYSICIAN’S EXPENSES. Requires ORCA to pay a physician providing relief under the program using fees collected by the center.

Sec. 487.606. PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT OF RELIEF PHYSICIANS. (a) Requires ORCA to assign physicians to provide relief to a rural area in accordance with certain priorities.

(b) Requires ORCA, in determining where to assign relief physicians, to consider the

number of physicians in the area available to provide relief services and the distance in that area to the nearest physician who practices in the same speciality.

(c) Authorizes residency program directors, at the request of ORCA, to assist ORCA in coordinating the assignment of relief physicians.

Sec. 487.607. RELIEF PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT. Requires ORCA to actively recruit physicians to participate in the program as relief physicians. Requires ORCA to concentrate on recruiting physicians involved in an accredited residency program in general pediatrics, general internal medicine, and general family medicine, physicians registered on ORCA's locum tenens registry, physicians employed at a medical school, and physicians working for private locum tenens groups.

Sec. 487.608. ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Provides that the rural physician relief advisory committee is composed of certain members appointed by the executive committee.

(b) Requires the advisory committee to assist ORCA in administering the program.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 487.051, Government Code, to require ORCA to seek state and federal money available for economic development in rural areas for programs under this chapter. Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 106.026(b), Health and Safety Code, as added by Section 2, Chapter 1221, Acts of the 77th Legislature, Regular Session, 2001, by redesignating it as Section 487.056(b), Government Code, and amending it, as follows:

Sec. 487.056. (a) Created from existing text. Adds new language relating to a report on the activities of the Rural Foundation.

(b) Replaces "center" with "office" in existing text. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 4. Amends Chapter 106H, Health and Safety Code, as added by Section 1, Chapter 831, Acts of the 77th legislature, Regular Session, 2001 by redesignating it as Chapter 487K, Government Code, and amending it, as follows:

Redesignates SUBCHAPTER H as SUBCHAPTER K.

Redesignates Sections 106.251through 106.254 as Sections 487.451 through 487.454. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 5. Amends Chapter 106H, Health and Safety Code, as added by Section 1, Chapter 1112, Acts of the 77th Legislature, Regular Session, 2001, by redesignating it as Chapter 487L, Government Code, and amending it, as follows:

Redesignates SUBCHAPTER H as SUBCHAPTER L.

Redesignates Sections 106.251through 106.253 as Sections 487.501through 487.503. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 6. Amends Chapter 106H, Health and Safety Code, as added by Section 2, Chapter 435, Acts of the 77th Legislature, Regular Session, 2001, by redesignating it as Chapter 487M, Government Code, and amending it, as follows:

Redesignates SUBCHAPTER H as SUBCHAPTER M.

