

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1836
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Some of Texas's costliest social problems—child abuse and neglect, premature deliveries, school failure, unemployment, and crime—are rooted in early childhood. Research also establishes that the brain develops most intensely during the first three years of children's lives, and the brain builds itself in response to children's experiences. Brain circuits that a child uses during these formative years are strengthened, but those not utilized diminish. Home visiting programs provide an opportunity to aid families and children during this critical time in their lives.

Home visiting involves trained personnel providing targeted services for parents and their children in their homes. These programs take a whole-family, or two-generation, approach. The goal is to aid parents and their children at the same time. Evidence-based, voluntary home visiting programs demonstrate potential benefits to children, families, and the state. Mothers involved in these programs can learn to better care for themselves, and they can have healthier—and safer—relationships with the father. Parents also can learn how to better care for their children, thereby enabling their children to live in safer and more stimulating homes. These positive parenting practices ultimately can lead to improved child health, academic performance, and overall adjustment for children. In sum, evidence-based, voluntary home visiting can reduce many costly social problems, such as low-weight births, emergency room visits, and children in the social welfare, mental illness, and juvenile corrections systems.

S.B. 1836 seeks to provide badly needed funding for this program through a voluntary check off that will allow persons to give at the time they obtain a birth certificate, marriage license, or divorce decree.

As proposed, S.B. 1836 amends current law relating to funding of the Texas Home Visiting Program.

[**Note:** While the statutory reference in this bill is to the Texas Board of Health, the following amendments affect the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission, as the successor agency to the Texas Board of Health.]

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Board of Health is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 191.0045, Health and Safety Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 191.0045(b), Health and Safety Code, as follows:

(b) Authorizes the Texas Board of Health by rule to prescribe a schedule of fees for vital statistics services. Deletes existing text prohibiting the aggregate of the amounts of the fees from exceeding the cost of administering the vital statistics system.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 191.005, Health and Safety Code, by amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsection (d), as follows:

(c) Requires all fees collected by the bureau of vital statistics, except as provided by Subsection (d), to be deposited to the credit of the vital statistics fund. Makes a nonsubstantive change.

(d) Authorizes a portion of the fees collected by the bureau of vital statistics to be appropriated by the legislature to the Health and Human Services Commission to fund the Texas Home Visiting Program.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2013.