

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1690
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Under the Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine, hospitals are not permitted to employ physicians without legislative authority. Instead, physicians may be employed through a physician-owned group or a nonprofit healthcare organization under Texas Medical Board oversight. The legislature has granted authority to employ physicians to rural hospitals and a number of hospital districts.

The Lubbock County Hospital District desires to employ physicians for hospital-based services, such as radiologists, hospitalists, and emergency center physicians.

Authorizing the hospital district to directly employ the physicians:

- Allows UMC to utilize existing resources to operate hospital-based professional services.
- Allows UMC to enter into managed care contracts on behalf of the physician group, avoiding the possibility that the hospital is in a payor plan but the physicians are not. Otherwise, the physicians must enter into these agreements individually. This is particularly important as the district's ACO (accountable care organization) and CIN (clinically integrated network) enters into value-based contracts with managed care organizations.
- Allows UMC to bill, collect, and retain professional fees.
- Allows the physicians to participate in UMC employee benefits such as the health plan and retirement plans.

S.B. 1690 follows that of prior acts authorizing various hospital districts to employ physicians, including safeguards to preserve independent medical judgment.

As proposed, S.B. 1690 amends current law relating to the authority of the Lubbock County Hospital District of Lubbock County, Texas, to employ physicians.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the medical executive committee of the Lubbock County Hospital District of Lubbock County, Texas, in SECTION 1 (Section 1053.0601, Special District Local Laws Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 1053, Special District Local Laws Code, by adding Section 1053.0601, as follows:

Sec. 1053.0601. EMPLOYMENT OF PHYSICIANS. (a) Defines "facility-based services" and "other health care facility" for purposes of this section.

(b) Authorizes the board of hospital managers of the Lubbock County Hospital District of Lubbock County, Texas (board; district), to employ physicians as the

board considers necessary to provide facility-based services at a hospital or other health care facility owned or operated by the district as provided by this section. Authorizes the board to retain all or part of the professional income generated by a physician employed by the district for such facility-based services if the board satisfies the requirements of this section.

(c) Prohibits the term of an employment contract entered into under this section from exceeding five years.

(d) Prohibits this section from being construed as authorizing the board to supervise or control the practice of medicine, as prohibited by Subtitle B (Physicians), Title 3 (Health Professions), Occupations Code.

(e) Requires the authority granted to the board under Subsection (b) to employ physicians to apply as necessary for the district to fulfill its statutory mandate to provide medical and hospital care for district residents, including needy and indigent residents, as provided by Sections 1053.101 (District Responsibility) and 1053.104 (Hospital System).

(f) Requires the medical executive committee of the district to adopt, maintain, and enforce policies and rules to ensure that a physician employed by the district exercises the physician's independent medical judgment in providing care to patients.

(g) Requires the policies and rules adopted by the medical executive committee under this section to include certain policies and to include rules requiring the disclosure of financial conflicts of interest by a member of the committee.

(h) Requires the medical executive committee and the board to jointly develop and implement a conflict management process to resolve any conflict between a policy or rule adopted by the committee under this section and a policy or rule of the district.

(i) Requires a member of the medical executive committee who is a physician to provide biennially to the chair of the committee a signed, verified statement indicating that the committee member:

(1) is licensed by the Texas Medical Board (TMB);

(2) will exercise independent medical judgment in all committee matters, including certain enumerated matters;

(3) will exercise the committee member's best efforts to ensure compliance with the policies and rules that are adopted or established by the committee; and

(4) will report immediately to TMB any action or event that the committee member reasonably and in good faith believes constitutes a compromise of the independent medical judgment of a physician in caring for a patient.

(j) Requires each physician employed by the district, for all matters relating to the practice of medicine, to ultimately report to the chair of the medical executive committee.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.