

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 721
By: Wilson
Corrections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties contend that current law is structured such that when a convicted felon is released from county lockup to the custody of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), there is a chance that the application of their good conduct time will make them eligible for immediate release without actually entering a TDCJ facility. These parties have raised that concern that this does not provide enough time to notify victims of the person's release. H.B. 721 seeks to ensure that a felon sentenced to a TDCJ facility serves a minimum amount of time in a TDCJ facility before release to mandatory supervision and that victims are notified as soon as practicable by TDCJ.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 721 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to take custody of an inmate who, at the time the inmate is sentenced to a term of imprisonment in TDCJ, is confined in a county jail and eligible for immediate release to mandatory supervision before the inmate may be released. The bill requires TDCJ, as soon as practicable after taking the inmate into custody, to send notice to a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim to the address provided in the victim impact statement or submitted with a written request for notification that the inmate is eligible for release to mandatory supervision. The notice must state that, not later than the 14th day after the date of the notice, the victim, guardian, or close relative may submit a written statement to the parole panel considering the inmate's release regarding the offense, the inmate, and the effect of the offense on the victim, guardian, or close relative.

H.B. 721 authorizes a parole panel to interview a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim regarding the release of the inmate to mandatory supervision.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.