

SUBJECT: Waiving state-operated facility entrance fees for persons with disabilities

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation and Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 4 ayes — Guillen, Larson, Murr, Smith

0 nays

3 absent — Dukes, Frullo, Márquez

WITNESSES: For — Bob Kafka, Adapt of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joe Tate, Community NOW!; Cathy Cranston, Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas; Danny Saenz)

Against — None

On — Kevin Good, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

BACKGROUND: Government Code, sec. 442.0051 authorizes the Texas Historical Commission to establish reasonable admission fees appropriate to historic sites under its jurisdiction.

Parks and Wildlife Code, sec. 13.015 authorizes the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to charge and collect user fees for park services. The fees are set by the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Some observers have noted that the low-paid attendants of people with disabilities living on small Social Security incomes often pay the cost of entrance fees when accompanying clients on outings.

DIGEST: CSHB 659 would require the Texas Historical Commission and the Parks and Wildlife Department to waive certain fees for persons with disabilities and the paid attendants present to assist them.

The Texas Historical Commission would waive individual or vehicle entrance fees to museums and other facilities under the commission's

control for a person with a physical, mental, intellectual, or developmental disability and that person's paid attendant.

The Parks and Wildlife Department would waive individual or vehicle entrance fees to state parks, recreational areas, and other facilities under the department's control for a person with a physical, mental, intellectual, or developmental disability and that person's paid attendant.

Both the Historical Commission and the Parks and Wildlife Commission would, in consultation with the Health and Human Services Commission, establish by rule eligibility requirements and procedures to implement the bill.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.