

SUBJECT: Creating the EMS assistance program account and a scholarship program

COMMITTEE: Public Health — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — S. Thompson, Wray, Allison, Frank, Guerra, Lucio, Ortega, Price, Sheffield, Zedler

0 nays

1 absent — Coleman

WITNESSES: For — Dudley Wait, Texas EMS Alliance; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Rick Thompson, Texas Association of Counties; Windy Johnson, Texas Conference of Urban Counties; Dinah Welsh, Texas EMS, Trauma and Acute Care Foundation; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Gregory Young)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Bill Kelberlau)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Stephen Pahl, Department of State Health Services-Consumer Protection)

BACKGROUND: Health and Safety Code sec. 773.252 establishes the emergency medical services (EMS) assistance program to provide financial and educational assistance to eligible medical service providers. The program is overseen by the Department of State Health Services and includes grants to eligible EMS providers and an educational curriculum to provide training to rural EMS personnel.

Government Code sec. 403.106 creates the permanent fund for EMS and trauma care as a dedicated account in the general revenue fund. This fund supports the EMS assistance program.

Interested parties have suggested that the EMS and trauma care permanent fund has insufficient funds to keep up with existing state commitments and the EMS assistance grant program.

DIGEST: CSHB 1477 would create a scholarship program for EMS personnel and would establish an account in the state general revenue fund to provide grants and additional funding to EMS providers, trauma service area regional advisory councils, academic institutions, and EMS personnel applying for assistance under the program.

EMS Scholarship Program. The bill would require the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) by rule to establish the Emergency Medical Services Scholarship Program. The program would provide financial assistance to emergency medical services personnel to pay tuition and other applicable fees for eligible coursework at institutions of higher education.

EMS personnel could apply to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in the form and manner provided by the executive commissioner to receive a scholarship under the program. If DSHS determined that an applicant was eligible for assistance under the scholarship program, the department could provide a grant to the applicant.

The executive commissioner of HHSC would have to adopt rules for determining eligibility under the scholarship program and the coursework that qualified for a scholarship.

EMS assistance program account. The bill would create the emergency medical services assistance program account as a dedicated account in the general revenue fund. Money in the account could be appropriated only to DSHS to provide grants to:

- EMS providers applying for assistance under the EMS assistance program;
- trauma service area regional advisory councils;
- provide funding to a general academic teaching institution, medical and dental unit, other agency of higher education, or public technical institute offering a distance-learning EMS curriculum; or
- EMS personnel applying for assistance under the scholarship

program.

EMS assistance program. The bill would expand the EMS assistance program to include grants to trauma service area regional advisory councils and provide funding for an educational curriculum to train rural EMS personnel and for the scholarship program.

Deposit of funds. The bill would amend requirements for the deposit of money received from state traffic fines and general penalties on certain convictions. The comptroller would be required to deposit 57 percent of this money, rather than 67 percent, to the credit of the undedicated portion of the general revenue fund, and 10 percent to the credit of the EMS assistance program account.

Applicability. The provisions relating to the depositing of funds received from state traffic fines and other penalties would apply only to the distribution of revenue collected on or after the effective date of the bill.

DSHS would be required to implement a provision of the bill only if the Legislature appropriated money specifically for this purpose. If no money was appropriated, DSHS could implement a provision of the bill using other appropriations available for that purpose.

The Health and Human Services executive commissioner would have to adopt rules necessary to implement the provisions of the bill as soon as practicable after the effective date.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of about \$15 million to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2020-21.