

- SUBJECT:** Collecting and reporting foster care history of juvenile offenders
- COMMITTEE:** Juvenile Justice and Family Issues — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Dutton, Dale, Moody, Schofield, Thierry
- 2 nays — Biedermann, Cain
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Terry Smith, Dallas County Juvenile Department; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Katherine Barillas, One Voice Texas; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Pamela McPeters, TexProtects (The Texas Association for the Protection of Children); Kimberly Knox, Upbring; Sacha Jacobson; CJ Grisham)
- Against — None
- On — Lauren Rose, Texans Care for Children; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Liz Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services; Jill Mata, Texas Juvenile Justice Department)
- BACKGROUND:** Human Resources Code, ch. 243 governs the admission of juvenile offenders to a secure facility.
- DIGEST:** HB 932 would require the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) to determine whether a juvenile offender committed to the department had ever been placed in foster care, and if so, how many times. This inquiry would be part of the intake process for a juvenile offender sentenced to confinement. TJJD would be required to summarize statistical information concerning the total number and percentage of children held by the department in the preceding two years who had been in foster care and report those figures to the governor and legislative leaders by January 31 of each even-numbered year.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 932 would give policymakers and advocates more information about the relationship between a child's contact with the juvenile justice system and exposure to the foster care system. Currently, there is little communication between the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) and the Department of Family and Protective Services, even though research has shown that youths who are exposed to both systems are younger at the time of their first arrest, have more difficulty in school, and have more extensive mental health needs than youths who are not involved in both systems. The report authorized by this bill would be a first step toward providing the state with more information about its youth who are involved in both systems.

According to the Legislative Budget Board, HB 932 would have no significant fiscal implication to the state. This bill merely would provide data to lawmakers on one of the state's most vulnerable populations in an effort to learn about and address any problems with the connection between foster care and juvenile corrections.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** Increasing the data collection and reporting requirements for TJJD could make juvenile justice more expensive. While the issue is serious, the number of juveniles sentenced to confinement is small and does not warrant spending more money or increasing the scope of government.

**NOTES:** A companion bill, SB 796 by West, was referred to the Senate Criminal Justice Committee on February 22.