
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5597 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOIDS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to establish a pilot program in up to five urban, suburban, and rural communities to serve individuals with opioid use disorder. The department must do this by January 1, 2022, and within available appropriations.

Under the bill, each participating community must form a team of at least two peer navigators who must, among other things, (1) travel throughout the community to address the health care and social needs of individuals with opioid use disorder and (2) complete regularly updated training on non-coercive and non-stigmatizing methods for engaging these individuals, as determined by the DMHAS commissioner.

The bill also requires the DMHAS commissioner to report by January 1, 2023, to the Public Health Committee on the pilot program, including its success and any recommendations for its continuation or expansion.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Public Health commissioner, by January 1, 2022, to (1) establish guidelines for the use of evidence-based, nonpharmaceutical therapies to treat chronic pain, including chiropractic treatment and physical therapy, and (2) conduct educational and outreach activities to raise awareness about these guidelines.

*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill, (1) removing the provision establishing a task force to study protocols used by certain health care professionals following opioid overdose deaths and

(2) adding the pilot program provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

PEER NAVIGATORS

The bill requires each community participating in the pilot program to form a team of at least two peer navigators to work to:

1. increase engagement between individuals with opioid use disorder and providers of treatment, healthcare and social services;
2. improve the retention of these individuals in opioid use treatment by addressing their social determinants of health and emerging local conditions that affect these determinants; and
3. increase the community's capacity to support these individuals by identifying and addressing systemic barriers to treatment, health care, and social services and social support.

The bill requires the team of peer navigators to (1) travel throughout the community to address in-person the health care and social needs of individuals with opioid use disorder and (2) be accessible to these individuals through a phone number with texting capabilities and social media.

Under the bill, a "peer navigator" is a person with experience working with individuals with substance use disorder who (1) provides nonmedical mental health care and substance use services and (2) has a collaborative relationship with health care professionals authorized to prescribe medications to treat opioid use disorder.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/29/2021)