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CAPITOL NEWSLETTER

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This week we reached a pivotal point in the legislative session. Friday, March 15 was the last day a House bill could be heard from the General Calendar. Many of our bills have passed the House and are currently in the Senate. One of them is on its way to the Governor. We still have a lot of work to do to ensure passage of our legislation before the end of session in two weeks. I will keep you updated. Have a great weekend!



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

REGIONAL CENTER FOR PUBLIC SAFETY EXCELLENCE

HB 1887, filed by Representative Muñoz and sponsored by Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (D-McAllen) has passed the House and is currently referred to the Senate Higher Education Committee. This bill establishes a Regional Center for Public Safety Excellence that will provide law enforcement training. This Center will be operated jointly by South Texas College, the City of Pharr, and other community partners.

TXDOT OVERSIGHT OF OVERWEIGHT CORRIDORS

HB 2085, filed by Representative Muñoz and SB 1424 by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville), requires the TxDOT to set minimum requirements for determining the feasibility, viability, and economic impact of additional overweight corridors in our state.

TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEMS DISTRIBUTION DATE

HB 2168 filed by Representative Muñoz and sponsored by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville), has passed the House and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee. This bill relates to Teacher Retirement System

annuity payment dates. It will allow retirees quick access to their benefits by making the payment date on the last weekday of the month. Currently, retirees receive their payments on the first day of the month and delays occur when the first of the month falls on a weekend or holiday.

MEDICAID TRANSPARENCY

HB 2084, filed by Representative Muñoz and sponsored by Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa (D-McAllen), is scheduled for a public hearing on May 18 in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

This bill seeks to create transparencies in the premium payment rate-setting process in the Medicaid Managed Care Programs and CHIP. The rate setting process is not well documented and is difficult to follow the methodology. As a result, it is difficult to evaluate whether rates are reasonable and appropriate.

DE NOVO HEARING BILL

HB 4086, filed by Representative Muñoz and sponsored by Senator Jose Rodriguez (D-El Paso), has passed the House and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate. This bill seeks to give a party the right to a de novo hearing before the referring court

regarding a temporary order in certain family law proceedings. Current law only requires referring courts to allow de novo hearings on final orders, not temporary orders.

MARRIAGE AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN JUDGES

HB 2278, filed by Representative Muñoz and SB 1424 by Senator Carlos Uresti (D-San Antonio), is currently pending a hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee. This bill seeks to amend the Family Code to allow current and retired associate judges to conduct marriage ceremonies. Ironically, an associate judge for a county court at law, possesses the authority to grant a divorce but are prohibited from presiding over a marriage ceremony.

PHARR FOREIGN-TRADE ZONE

HB 2515, filed by Representative Muñoz and sponsored by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) allows the City of Pharr to begin the process of establishing a FTZ adjacent to the Pharr International Bridge.

A FTZ is a secure area in which merchandise may be transported without formal customs entry, import quotas, and many other import restrictions. Taxes are assessed when the merchandise leaves the FTZ.