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**Schwertner's Infectious Disease
Preparedness Plan Passes the Texas Senate**

Based on lessons learned from the Ebola crisis in Dallas, SB 538 makes a number of key changes to the way the state responds to dangerous infectious disease emergencies.

AUSTIN -- This afternoon, the Texas Senate gave its approval to SB 538 by Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown), which makes a number of key reforms to the way the state of Texas manages and responds to dangerous infectious disease outbreaks. SB 538 passed the Texas Senate by a vote of 26-4 and carried the support of members from both parties. The bill now heads to the Texas House of Representatives for further consideration.

"I'm honored to have received such an overwhelming show of support from my Senate colleagues in passing this critical legislation to preserve the health and safety of Texas families," said Senator Schwertner. "Senate Bill 538 was developed to address a number of weaknesses in our state's public health response and ensure that Texas is better prepared to protect its citizens moving forward. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, it is one of my top priorities this session."

These new public health measures come on the heels of the state's recent Ebola scare, following Thomas Eric Duncan's admission to Texas Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas and subsequent diagnosis as the first confirmed case of Ebola in the United States. While the disease was ultimately contained and a large-scale infection was avoided, the event sparked a new debate about the adequacy of the state's public health response measures and its preparedness to respond to similar infectious disease outbreaks in the future.

SB 538 was developed based on recommendations from the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response, a team of experts assembled by then-Governor Rick Perry to study the efficacy of Texas' public health infrastructure. The legislation establishes a clear command structure in future public health emergencies and guarantees hospitals, medical workers, and first responders have the necessary tools to effectively handle the next infectious disease outbreak.

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