

COMMITTEES:
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, CHAIR
FINANCE
NOMINATIONS
TRANSPORTATION
WATER & RURAL AFFAIRS

THE SENATE OF TEXAS



LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 18

CAPITOL OFFICE:
GE.4 • P.O. Box 12068
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711
(512) 463-0118

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: 512-463-0118

February 4, 2019

Senator Kolkhorst Files Legislation Promoting Coordination of Mental Health Services

AUSTIN - Working with mental health officials and local law enforcement, Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) has filed a set of bills to promote Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) cooperation and coordination with those involved in the criminal justice system. If passed, SB 632 would facilitate better communication between peace officers who often are on the front lines of mental health issues and local community providers.

"Local law enforcement is increasingly finding themselves at the nexus of mental health issues across our state," said Kolkhorst. "Texans with mental health issues are often warehoused in local jails after an episode rather than receiving appropriate treatment. This disconnect means that law enforcement must conduct screenings related to suicide and mental health issues and left unaware or unable to access available mental health services. It's vital that we make sure the left hand knows what the right hand is doing."

Specifically, SB 632 seeks better cooperation by directing all LMHAs to appoint a sheriff or a sheriff's representative to their local governing board as an ex officio nonvoting member. The bill also requires that local law enforcement is consulted when an LMHA develops their local service area plan.

Senator Kolkhorst also filed SB 633 that would enable state health officials to coordinate with rural LMHAs to prioritize their mental health services. While LMHAs currently create a local plan for serving the public, SB 633 ensures that taxpayer dollars and community resources are spent in the most cost effective and coordinated way at a regional level.

"This session we will likely invest millions of new dollars into community mental health services and that means our rural LMHAs must be prepared, coordinated and able to expand their capacity by working with other LMHAs in their regions. When rural communities work together, Texas is better and more people are served," Kolkhorst said. ###