

LUICO: NEW LAWS PROTECT SOUTH TEXAS FAMILIES FROM POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS DISEASES

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Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville), South Texas families were the big winners during the 2019 Legislative Session.

LUCIO: "Many laws were passed that will greatly assist them in their quality of life; two new laws will specifically protect them from potentially dangerous diseases."

BROWNSVILLE, RGV - Unfortunately, Rio Grande Valley residents often face the effects that destructive rainstorms and severe flooding can bring. During the summer of 2018, Hidalgo and Cameron counties faced severe rainstorms and flooding which negatively impacted hundreds of families. Regrettably, this happened again this year.

Because large amounts of rainfall and lack of adequate drainage can cause standing water to form, which can lead to breeding grounds for mosquitos, the risk of dangerous diseases carried by mosquitos is drastically increased.

To protect the public's health from this risk, I authored Senate Bill 1113 to provide a means for additional certified personnel in emergency situations to better contain the spread of mosquitos.

Valley public health officials testified on the importance of increasing surveillance and decreasing the spread of mosquitos because of the health risk they pose to countless families in the Rio Grande Valley. If not stopped, communicable diseases (e.g., such as localized Zika, dengue, and the Chikungunya virus) can spread and threaten our communities. All of which cause life threatening problems, such as birth defects from the Zika virus and dangerous high fevers from dengue.

This new law provides additional resources in times of need. It allows local public health departments to request additional boots on the ground in emergency declared areas. Health officials have said this will avoid unnecessary paperwork and losing precious time which can be used to better protect our families from these diseases.

We live in an area that is extremely humid and neighbors Mexico which has different health protections. We see mosquitos year round and have the day-to-day inflow of insects from border crossings that carry different types of communicable illnesses. Because this increases the potential public health risk in our communities, I authored Senate Bill 1312 to strengthen our ability to handle these threats on a day-to-day basis.

With this bill, we invest in our local public health departments to have the necessary manpower for years to come by creating a specialized border license for insect control. Through tailored testing and more accessible requirements, this license provides for more certified personnel in our health departments. We welcome the partnership that S.B. 1312 creates between our border health departments and the Department of Agriculture in their creation of this unique license.

Our booming and unique population is at the forefront of the ever changing public health. That is why these two laws work together during emergency situations and in the long-term. They provide greater resources, more people, and specialized assistance to decrease the spread, exterminate the threat, and better protect our children and elderly populations.

Because of this, I would like to thank everyone who helped these laws become a reality. Especially, our local health departments, including Hidalgo County Health Director, Eduardo Olivarez, who testified on why the Valley greatly needs these two bills to better protect our border children, pregnant women, and our elderly. I am wholeheartedly grateful to them for their hard work and support. Our shared commitment to the safety and wellness of South Texas families will allow us to grow our public health departments for the betterment of our region's future.

