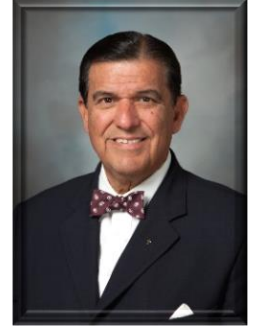




**STATE SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.
DISTRICT 27**



THE SENATE OF TEXAS
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Strengthening the Public Health Capacity of the Border Region

Sen. Lucio pre-files first set of bills for the 2021 Legislative Session addressing capacity of border Texas

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AUSTIN, TX – Today, Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) filed the first of a series of bills for the 2021 Legislative Session to strengthen public health in counties immediately on the international border with Mexico.

"Given the nature of the coronavirus pandemic and the current public health crisis disproportionately affecting border Texans, these bills mark the first set of critical legislation I am authoring to address the capacity of border public health departments and chronic health concerns of the region to improve outcomes on diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity which make South Texans more vulnerable to the devastating effects of COVID-19," Sen. Lucio said.

Sen. Lucio is the Senate Ex Officio Member of the Texas Department of State Health Service's (DSHS) Task Force of Border Health Officials and member of the DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Advisory Panel. As author of the Task Force's enabling legislation (SB 1680, 2017), he filed the following bills today that further his conviction to help border communities:

Senate Bill 114 directs DSHS to establish a Border Public Health Multi-Disciplinary Response Team to deploy in response to outbreaks, public health threats, and disasters in the border counties.

Senate Bill 115 directs DSHS to conduct an assessment of capacity and resources of border laboratories, establish inter-local agreements for border laboratory resources, and allow for year-round testing for border counties needing this service.

Senate Bill 116 directs DSHS to develop a public health initiative to reduce the adverse health impacts of diabetes, hypertension, and obesity for adults and children in border counties through education, screening, and prevention treatment.

Border health departments, being adjacent to Mexico, are on the frontline safeguarding local communities, the state, and nation from new and emerging public health threats. Unlike other health departments in Texas, border health departments face unique challenges due to the regular crossings between Texas and Mexico, as well as lack of access to care, unemployment, prevalent chronic diseases, and poverty, which plague the region. Considering the demographics, rapid growth, and trans-migratory populations of the region, the complexities confronted by border health departments are formidable challenges not seen in other parts of Texas.

"These bills are critical to strengthening our border public health and I look forward to working with our local health officials to address our region's needs during the upcoming 2021 Legislative Session," Sen. Lucio added. The 87th Legislature begins on January 12, 2021. Today, November 9, is the first day legislators may file bills for the 2021 Legislative Session.

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Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D – Harlingen) represents Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Kleberg, and Willacy Counties. He is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education; Member of the Senate Committees on State Affairs; Veteran Affairs & Border Security; and of the Select Committees on Redistricting; and, Texas Ports. He is member of the Sunset Advisory Commission, DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Advisory Panel, and has been an ex-officio member of the DSHS Task Force of Border Public Health Officials since 2017. Elected in 1991, Lucio is third in seniority in the Texas Senate.