

Huge cuts expected for state agencies that help Texans

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Proposed budget cuts are bombarding agencies that assist people throughout the state.

The 82nd Texas Legislature's recommendations could mean big cut backs for departments with missions to serve Texans with needs. In turn, the budget crisis may hit close to home.

At the Department of Aging and Disability Services, which serves more than 300,000 people, less money would mean program levels decreased. But spokeswoman Allison Lowery cautions that nothing is final at this point.

"We're definitely still early in the process," said Lowery. "Everything at this point is still a proposal."

House Bill 4 is one of the most talked about at the Statehouse. It's the piece of legislation that outlines suggested cuts for the current budget year, which ends Aug. 31.

State Rep. Dawnna Dukes, D-Austin, joined her Democratic colleagues and opposed HB 4 on cuts that reduces state services by a total of 17 percent. That includes cuts the state previously asked agencies to make during the last Legislative session.

Cuts include:

- Health and Human Services Commission - \$114,214,139
- Teacher Retirement System - \$3,700,000
- Community colleges, such as Austin Community College - \$3,507,989
- Department of Aging and Disability Services - \$57,486,512
- Department of Family and Protective Services - \$16,465,070

Agency staffers have presented facts and figures to appropriations committee members. "We just want to provide them with the best information possible," Lowery said. "They obviously have some very difficult decisions to make."

State Representative Jimmie Don Aycock, R-Killeen, says looking for money by way of cuts is the order of business for him and his colleagues.

"I know millions sound like a lot of money and they are a lot of serious money," said Aycock. "But we're looking for billions."

Lawmakers proposed \$800 million in cuts. Rep. Dukes and her Democratic colleagues voted against slashing funding for programs.

"If the leadership, those who are in control, would determine that they take off the table the line in the sand they have drawn and finding additional revenues," she said.

Nursing homes across the state stand to lose millions this budget year, and billions for the next budget, according to Tim Graves, President and CEO of Texas Health Care Association. \$57 million in cuts, or about 3 percent, are proposed for the current budget.

"There will be wage freezes; there will be renovation projects put off, stopped," said Graves. "It will impact the quality of care."

The committee voted along party lines to approve the cuts proposed in HB 4. The House will now have to consider the measure.

Click here to [read the text of HB 4](#).

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