

Research Plan: Senate Bill 2827, House Bill 2729, Emergency Communications

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Support:

Deputy Executive Director Approval: Initial: Date:

Executive Director Approval: Initial: Date:

Purpose

To perform a comprehensive evaluation of the policies and procedures for reporting crimes and emergencies on the campuses of colleges and universities in Tennessee, including an evaluation of the routing and storage of calls or other communications reporting crimes and emergencies on these campuses.

Background

Senate Bill 2827 by Senator Hensley and House Bill 2729 by Representative Ogles, as amended, direct the Commission to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the routing and storage of emergency communications on colleges and universities in this state. The evaluation must include a review of

- the ability of the institution to store data and recordings relating to emergency communications, and the ability to store and retrieve complaints of criminal activity alleged to have occurred on campus; and
- best policies and procedures, and consistency of messaging in this state, with respect to improving the ability of colleges and universities to store data and recordings relating to emergency communications.

The amended bill passed in the Senate; it was sent to summer study by the House Finance, Ways, and Means subcommittee, but Representative Williams, a TACIR member, said that he would request that the Commission conduct the study.

Representative Ogles, when interviewed by Commission staff, said he proposed the study after a preliminary review by legislative interns found that colleges and universities in Tennessee have adopted differing policies and procedures for handling

calls and other methods of reporting crime and emergencies on their campuses. He said it can be unclear whether these policies and procedures result in communications being recorded and saved so they can be used in future investigations, and it is sometimes unclear whether the policies and procedures result in crimes being reported to law enforcement. Representative Ogles said some public and private institutions, including those with students who live on campus, have reported little or no crime over several years. He is concerned that crimes, including assault and sexual assault, on some campuses might be underreported.

Colleges and universities are required to report campus crime statistics under both federal and state law. The federal Clery Act requires colleges and universities that participate in federal financial aid programs to collect and report campus crime statistics annually and provide timely warnings of threats to the safety of students or employees. Tennessee state law requires all police departments, including campus police departments, to report crime statistics annually to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. Public Chapter 958, Acts of 2022—which was also sponsored by Senator Hensley and Representative Ogles—authorizes the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury to review colleges and universities in Tennessee to ensure their compliance with the crime statistics reporting requirements in state law.

Define the Problem

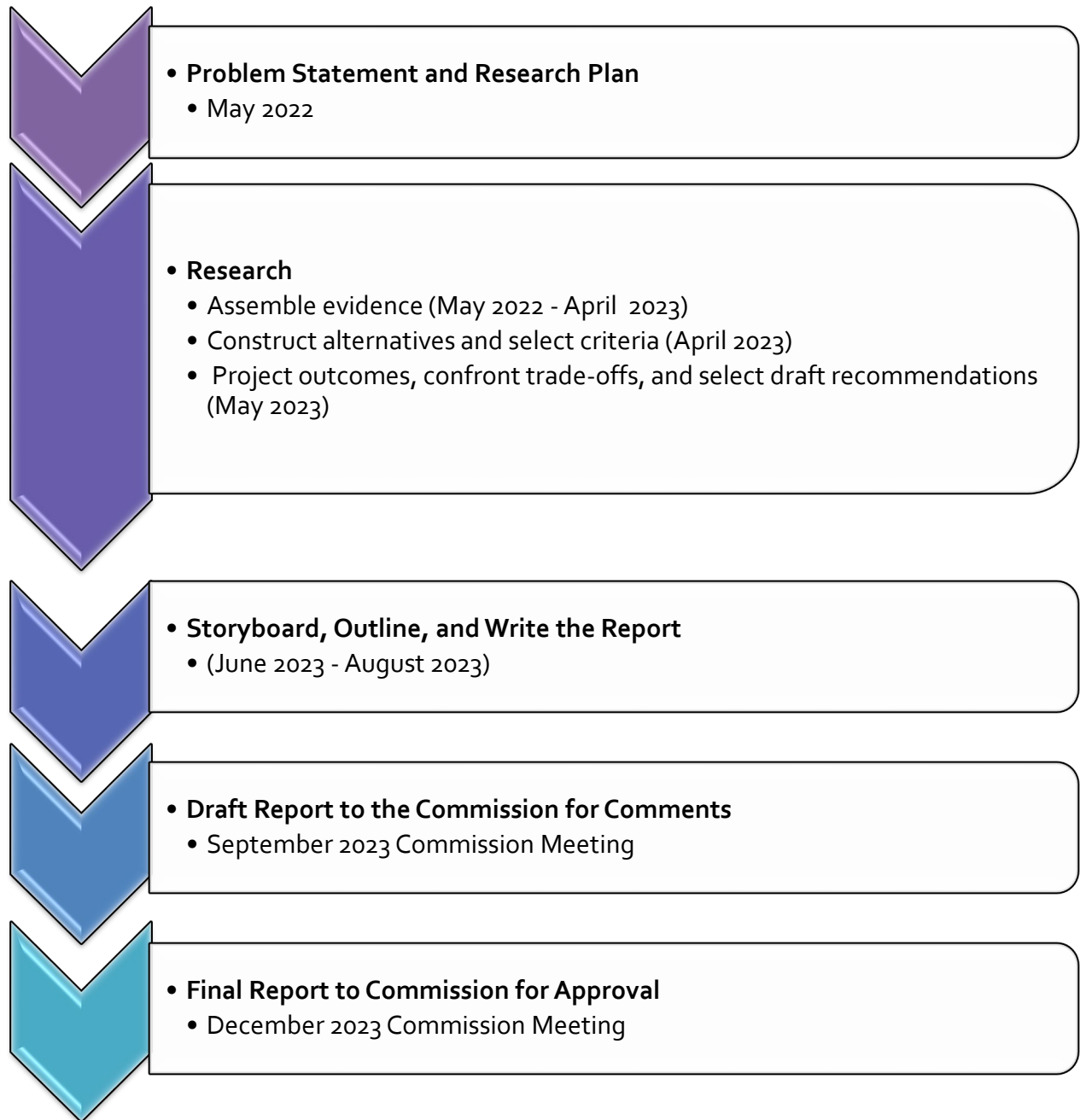
Policies and procedures for handling calls and other methods of reporting crimes and emergencies on the campuses of colleges and universities in Tennessee might affect the ability to investigate on-campus incidents and might result in underreporting of those incidents, creating potential risks to public safety.

Assemble Some Evidence

- Review referred legislation, Senate Bill 2827 and House Bill 2729, to determine what it directs the Commission to study.
 - Interview the sponsors of the legislation and any other members of the General Assembly who have an interest in the bill.
 - Review committee hearings on the bill and summarize comments and concerns of committee members, the bill sponsors, and others speaking for or against the bill.
 - Review similar bills from previous general assemblies, including relevant committee hearings.

- Review the fiscal note. Consult with the Fiscal Review Committee and follow up with agencies submitting support forms to determine the estimated cost, method, and rationale.
- Interview stakeholders to determine what is driving the issue. These include but are not limited to representatives of
 - Tennessee Emergency Communications Board (TECB)
 - Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI)
 - US Department of Education
 - Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)
 - Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR)
 - Public and Private colleges and universities in Tennessee
 - Tennessee's local emergency communications districts
 - Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police
- Review Tennessee's statutes and regulations relevant to the study.
- Review relevant federal statutes and regulations.
- Review similar policies and laws in other states.
- Review policies, procedures and practices of Tennessee's colleges and universities related to emergency communications and any relevant data sets.
- Review relevant literature.

Proposed Research Timeline



SENATE BILL 2827

By Hensley

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;
Title 7; Title 38; Title 39; Title 49; Title 65 and Title
68, relative to emergency communications.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 7-86-315, is amended by deleting the section and substituting:

(a) The board shall annually report to the governor, the speaker of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives on the activities of the board for the preceding year. The board shall annually publish the report on the board's website.

(b) The board shall receive and consider from any source, whether private or governmental, suggestions for amendments to this chapter. The suggestions offered must be included in the report described in subsection (a).

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

Amendment No. 1 to SB2827

Briggs
Signature of Sponsor

AMEND Senate Bill No. 2827

House Bill No. 2729*

by deleting all language after the enacting clause and substituting:

SECTION 1.

(a) The Tennessee advisory commission on intergovernmental relations (TACIR) shall perform a comprehensive evaluation of the routing and storage of emergency communications on colleges and universities in this state.

(b) The evaluation must include a review of:

(1) The ability of the institution to store data and recordings relating to emergency communications, and the ability to store and retrieve complaints of criminal activity alleged to have occurred on campus; and

(2) Best policies and procedures, and consistency of messaging in this state, with respect to improving the ability of colleges and universities to store data and recordings relating to emergency communications.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.