

The House Public Education Committee met for its second hearing this week and heard bills covering topics including curriculum, school safety and mental health. The committee also voted to approve three bills that were heard last week.

TSTA registered support for three bills this week:

- HB 725 by Patterson (R-Frisco) would allow any child who has been in foster care in any state or territory to be eligible to attend tuition-free prekindergarten in Texas public schools. Current law limits eligibility to children who have been in the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
- HB 1114 by Thierry (D-Houston) would offer school districts increased options to provide mental health to students through school-based health centers
- HB 1603 by Huberty (R-Kingwood) would remove the expiration date from the law that allows for individual graduation committees. A student who has failed an end-of-course STAAR assessment required for graduation may still receive a high school diploma if an individual graduation committee determines that the student has qualified to graduate based on other evidence.

Other bills considered in this week's hearing:

- HB 129 by González (D-Clint) would add civics education to the 6th grade social studies TEKS. As originally filed, the bill would have added a required credit to the high school graduation requirements. In response to feedback from TSTA and other educational organizations, Rep. González presented a committee substitute version of the bill that would remove the high school credit requirement and move the curriculum down to lower grades. TSTA supports the substitute version of this bill.
- HB 159 by González (D-Clint) would require educator preparation programs to incorporate instruction about how to best serve students with special needs into their curriculum.
- HB 353 by Dutton (D-Houston) would require that public school accountability data be disaggregated by sex in addition to race and ethnicity.
- HB 445 by Allison (R-San Antonio) relates to embedding positive character traits in the K-12 curriculum. This is an expanded version of HB 1026 filed in the 86th Legislative Session that would add diversity, equity and inclusion to the existing standards for character education.
- HB 759 by Harless (R-Spring) would create a student threat assessment database whereby the threat assessment teams created by SB 11 (86-R) would be required to go a step further and identify students who posed a threat to harm themselves or others. The database would follow the student until the age of 21 and would be accessible by law enforcement and school administration of any public or private school where the student has attended or is currently attending.
- HB 785 by Allen (D-Houston) would codify how admission, review and dismissal committees would incorporate and review student behavior intervention plans (BIP). The bill would also increase notification requirements to parents regarding BIPs and the use of student restraint. In response to feedback from TSTA and other education groups, Rep. Allen presented a committee substitute that includes clarifications and removes section two of the original bill.
- HB 1080 by Patterson (R-Frisco) would ensure UIL rules do not exclude public school students who are receiving services from an outpatient mental health care facility.

The committee voted to approve three bills:

- HB 690 by Metcalf (R-Conroe) would require school board members to take a course on school safety created by the Texas School Safety Center and the State Board of Education.
- HB 773 by VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would add an indicator into the school accountability system for students who successfully complete a program of study in career and technical education (CTE). Currently schools offering programs of study are not credited for student completion rates.
- HB 1147 by Huberty (R-Kingwood) would add students who enlist in the Texas National Guard to the definition of military readiness, which would add to the secondary pursuits that would qualify districts for the College, Career and Military Readiness outcomes bonus created by last session's HB 3. In current law, the definition only includes students who enlist in the United States armed forces.