

# Support certified counselors to protect our kids

Urge your school district to vote NO to creating a paid or volunteer chaplain program “to provide support, services and programs for students.”

The 88th Texas Legislature passed SB 763, legislation that gives public school districts the option to hire religiously affiliated chaplains to work alongside or replace professional school counselors. The National School Chaplain Association championed this legislation with the stated intent “to bring God and prayer back to school” with Christian ministry programs designed to educate and counsel public school students.

SB 763 does not require this practice of districts, but it does require every district in the state to take a record vote on the matter. **Urge your district to vote no on policy that infringes on student and parent rights and would put Texas children at risk!**

The new law does not define or establish even minimum standards for chaplain programs.

- authorizes districts to assign an employee or volunteer the title of chaplain
- does not require chaplains to be trained as educators or hold Texas educator certification
- does not require chaplains to be trained in counseling or hold any professional license

The new law also does not require oversight of chaplain practices and does not prohibit teach-



ings that conflict with the standards adopted by the elected SBOE.

The new law compromises student safety by authorizing districts to use the School Safety Allotment to compensate chaplains, which would be at the expense of measures proven to enhance school safety and student wellbeing. Volunteer chaplains may not be required to

undergo a background check and can work with a student without parental consent. Chaplains can “treat” students in need of professional behavioral health services or suicide prevention with disproven methods and shame them by labelling certain struggles or identity challenges as sins.

If your district votes to permit the use of religious chaplains, it is critical that you advocate for policies that would establish minimum standards, require oversight of chaplain practices and ensure student safety. At a minimum, any program should require training in core competencies commensurate with non-religious professionals engaged in the same work, such as trauma-informed practices and training in laws related to maintaining confidentiality of sensitive personal information.

TSTA’s position remains steadfast: students in need deserve to be counseled by professionals who have proven they are competent to serve the best interests of their charges. SB 763 does not live up to this standard of care.

