

- SUBJECT:** Requiring school districts to have dating violence policies
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, with amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Delisi, Dutton, Eissler, Hochberg, W. Keffer, Mowery
- 1 present not voting — Branch
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Victoria Camp, Texas Association Against Sexual Assault; Jeanette Rodriguez, Texas State Teachers Association; Shannon Sandra, Safeplace School-based Counselor; Jo Hannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Vanessa Conner; Joe Dehacerda, Carolyn Mosley; RaeAnne Spence
- Against — none
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 11.252, requires each school district to have a district improvement plan. The purpose of the district improvement plan is to guide district and campus staff in the improvement of student performance in order to attain certain state standards.
- DIGEST:** HB 1166 would require each school district to adopt and implement a dating violence policy to be included in its district improvement plan. The policy would have to include a definition of dating violence that includes the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. The policy also would have to address safety planning, enforcement of protective orders, school-based alternatives to protective orders, training for teachers and administrators, counseling for affected students, and awareness education.
- The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1166 would help ensure that school districts are prepared to respond to a problem that threatens the health and safety of youth throughout Texas. The statistics are alarming: one in five teen girls experiences dating violence in a relationship; physical aggression occurs in one in three teen dating relationships; twelve percent of high school students, male and female, experience some form of dating violence; and 42 percent of boys and 43 percent of girls say that their abuse occurred in a school building or on school grounds.

The bill would require districts to recognize the problem by defining it in the district improvement plan and confront it through safety planning, enforcement of protective orders, staff training, counseling and awareness education. If school districts take these measures, they may be able to avoid a situation like the one that occurred in Austin in March 2003, when a high school student was killed at her school by her ex-boyfriend. School districts throughout Texas should be required to make efforts to prevent this tragedy from occurring again in Texas.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Although the concepts behind this bill are valid and important, the proper place in law for these provisions are the criminal justice statutes and the Penal Code.