

SUBJECT: Membership and activities of local school health advisory councils

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Allen, Aycock, Farias, Olivo

2 nays — Jackson, Weber

3 absent — Dutton, Patrick, Shelton

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 9 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jay Arnold, Texas Parent Teacher Association; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Douglas Dunsavage, American Heart Association; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary School Principals and Supervisors Association; Marshall Kenderdine, Texas Pediatric Society, Partnership for a Healthy Texas; David Marwitz, American Cancer Society; Julie Shields, Texas Association of School Boards; Jodie Smith, Texans Care for Children; Charles Stuart, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas; James Willman, Texas Nurses Association; Lynda Woolbert; Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 28.004 requires a school district board of trustees to appoint members to the local school health advisory council. School health advisory councils are district-level councils that are responsible for creating strategies to integrate health curriculum into a coordinated school health program that reflects local values. A majority of the members must be parents who are not employed by the district. The board of trustees may appoint:

- public school teachers;
- public school administrators;
- district students;
- health care professionals;
- members of the business community;

- law enforcement personnel;
- senior citizens;
- members of the clergy; and
- representatives of nonprofit health organizations.

DIGEST: SB 283 would require that a parent of a student enrolled in the district serve as chair or co-chair of a local school health advisory council.

The bill would require a local school health advisory council to meet at least four times each year, and to submit to the board of trustees, at least annually, a written report that included:

- council recommendations;
- suggested modifications to a council recommendation previously submitted to the board; and
- detailed explanations of council activities between the date of the current report and the date of the last prior written report.

By April 1, 2010, the health advisory council would have to submit to the board of trustees an initial report.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 283 would provide for organizational structure and mechanisms for accountability for local school health advisory councils. A more structured set of guidelines would make these councils more effective in developing and implementing coordinated school health plans. It is very important for schools to implement effective health curricula. The mission of these local committees is especially important as obesity has become a serious health problem in Texas, with 42 percent of fourth graders in Texas obese, overweight, or at risk of becoming overweight and 70 percent of overweight children likely to become overweight adults.

OPPONENTS SAY: SB 283 would interfere with local decision-making and control by mandating inflexible requirements on local school health advisory councils. A local council is capable of determining when and how often it should meet, as well as maintaining open communication with school administrators. These councils are supposed to reflect community values,

and community representatives should determine how the council should operate.