

- SUBJECT:** Football helmet safety requirements in public school football programs
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Allen, Guillen, Huberty, Shelton, Strama, Weber
0 nays
3 absent — Aycock, Dutton, T. Smith
- WITNESSES:** For — Jeff Blake, Nathaniel Newton (*Registered, but did not testify*: Troy Alexander, Texas Medical Association; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Larry Higdon, Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association; Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society; D.W. Rutledge, Texas High School Coaches Association)
Against — None
On — Mark Cousins, UIL (*Registered, but did not testify*: Bess Sirmon-Fjordbak, Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association)
- BACKGROUND:** Reconditioning a football helmet involves smoothing out scratches and surface imperfections, inspecting and possibly replacing faceguards, thoroughly washing and sanitizing all pads inside the helmet, and replacing all hardware. Recertifying a football helmet means testing the helmet against rigorous safety standards.
- DIGEST:** HB 675 would prohibit a school district from using a football helmet that was 16 years old or older in the district’s football program. A school district would have to ensure that each football helmet used in the district’s football program that was 10 or more years old was reconditioned at least every two years.

The bill would require a school district to maintain and make available to parents of the district’s students documentation that indicated the age of each football helmet used in the district’s football program and the dates on which each football helmet was reconditioned.

The bill would allow the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to adopt rules to implement the bill. UIL rules would have to be approved by the commissioner of education.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2011, and would apply beginning with the 2012-13 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 675 would increase the safety of public school football players and help prevent serious injuries. Helmets are the first line of defense in preventing head injuries among football players. According to the National Athletic Trainers Association, an estimated 43,000 to 67,000 high school football players each year suffer concussions. Repeated concussions can lead to chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a progressive degenerative disease caused by multiple concussions and other head injuries. The bill would align Texas standards with those of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment.

The bill likely would not have a fiscal impact on school districts because manufacturers have requirements for recertification and reconditioning to maintain warranties on helmets and to decrease the school districts' liability should injury occur. Most manufacturers require that football helmets be reconditioned every two years to maintain the manufacturer's warranty, but some require the helmets to be reconditioned every year. In addition, many school districts already do not use helmets that are older than 16 years.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 675 could serve as an unfunded mandate to school districts if the school district did not currently recondition football helmets every two years or if the school districts used helmets 16 years old or older. The fiscal note indicates that school districts using helmets 16 years old or older could experience significant costs to comply with the bill, estimating that each new helmet would cost between \$150 and \$300 and each reconditioned helmet would cost between \$25 and \$50.