

- SUBJECT:** Requiring driver education schools to accommodate for deaf students
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 5 — 28-2 (Creighton, Huffines)
- WITNESSES:** For — Joe Sanders; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; Deborah Caldwell, Northeast ISD; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Janna Lilly, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Columba Wilson)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Raymond Pizarro, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations; Kara Belew, Texas Education Agency)
- DIGEST:** SB 1051 would require the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) to create a driver education course for minors and adults that presented the course curriculum in American Sign Language (ASL) and to make the course available on the department's website. TDLR could collaborate with another state agency to create the course.
- The Texas Commission of Licensing and Regulation (TCLR) would establish a fee for the online ASL course, in addition to fees charged for a certificate, which could not exceed the amount necessary to cover the costs of creating and administering the course. The cost of the ASL course also could not exceed the average cost of an online course provided in Texas.

TCLR would require a driver education school to make reasonable modifications and offer aids and services in a manner described by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act when providing the classroom portion of a standard driver education course to ensure a student who was deaf or hard of hearing could participate.

A driver education school would be required to provide to TDLR the school's plan for complying with the accommodations requirement as a condition of obtaining or renewing a driver education school license. A school could comply with the requirement by playing a video that presented the classroom portion of the course.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 1051 would require driver education schools to provide some type of reasonable accommodation in the classroom for deaf and hard of hearing students, ensuring those students had easier access to driving instruction. The bill specifies that required accommodations could be satisfied with just an instructional video, including the online course presented in American Sign Language that the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation would create and post to its website.

The bill would require the Texas Commission of Licensing and Regulation to issue a fee to cover startup and administrative costs related to the video, but the fee could not be more than the average cost of a driver education course in the state.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

SB 1051 would impose a burdensome fee for a driver education course given in American Sign Language. It is not necessary because a driver education course already could be given for deaf and hard of hearing students within existing resources.