

**SUBJECT:** Requiring training to prevent abuse of children with cognitive disabilities

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 12 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Allison, Ashby, K. Bell, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — Dutton

**WITNESSES:** For — Deborah Fine-Knapp, BeLydia; Wendy Davis, Rhea Shahane, and Jasmine Owen, Deeds Not Words; Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cynthia Humphrey, Association of Substance Abuse Programs; Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Lauren Baker, Alma Baker, Claudia Yoli Ferla, Andrea Reyes, and Tatum Zeko, Deeds Not Words; Lisa Flores, Easter Seals Central Texas; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.; Alissa Sughrue, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; Kristin McGuire, TCASE; Ted Raab, Texas AFT; Chris Kaiser, Texas Association Against Sexual Assault; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Kathryn Freeman, Texas Baptists Christian Life Commission; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Shannon Noble, Texas Counseling Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association; Kyle Piccola, The Arc of Texas)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin and Matt Montano, TEA)

**BACKGROUND:** SB 2039, enacted in 2017 by the 85th Legislature, amended Education

Code sec. 38.0041 to expand a requirement that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools implement certain policies addressing child maltreatment. SB 2039 added sex trafficking to the issues that must be addressed and allowed school districts to collaborate with local law enforcement and outside consultants to create the policy and a referral protocol for high-risk students.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 111 would reenact certain sections of the Education Code as amended by SB 2039 and would require existing training for school district and open-enrollment charter school employees on child maltreatment to include techniques for recognizing and preventing the sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children with significant cognitive disabilities. The training would use resources developed by the Texas Education Agency or the commissioner.

This 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, 2019. CSHB 111 would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 111 would extend existing training requirements for public school employees to better protect the students most vulnerable to sexual abuse and human trafficking. Children with cognitive disabilities experience abuse and human trafficking at higher rates than children without disabilities and are less likely to report abuse. Awareness and prevention training that specifically highlights the risks disabled students face would help to decrease child abuse in the state.

The prevalence and seriousness of abuse of disabled children warrants prevention training in all districts across the state, regardless of size or location. Because the Texas Education Agency would develop resources for the training, local districts would not have to create new materials.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** CSHB 111 would add to existing statewide training requirements, rather than allowing a local approach based on the needs of each district.