

SUBJECT: Requiring notification for schools lacking full-time nurses

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 10 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allison, K. Bell, Dutton, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Talarico, VanDeaver

1 nay — Sanford

1 absent — Allen

1 present not voting — Ashby

WITNESSES: For — Karen Schwind, Texas School Nurse Organization; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cynthia Humphrey, Association of Substance Abuse Programs; Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Chris Masey, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Annalee Gulley, MHA Of Greater Houston; Greg Hansch, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Andrew Cates, Texas Nurses Association; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association)

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 1517 would require a public school, including a charter school, that did not have a full-time nurse present at the school for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the school year to provide written notice of the absence to parents. A school would be considered to have the equivalent of a full-time nurse if it had two or more nurses assigned to the school, with all regular student instructional hours were covered by at least one nurse.

The principal would have to provide the notice, which could be posted on

the school's website, not later than the 30th instructional day after the first day the school did not have a full-time or full-time equivalent nurse. The school would have to make a good faith effort to provide the notice in a bilingual form to parents whose primary language was not English.

The bill would not apply to a school district or charter school with a student enrollment of less than 10,000 students. The bill would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1517 would improve transparency and encourage communication between parents and schools by requiring schools to notify parents if they do not have a school nurse available to help students with their medical needs. Although many schools have nurses, they are not required to do so. The bill would provide important information to parents whose children may have chronic health issues that could need attention from a school nurse.

The bill would not burden schools, which could provide the notice on their websites. Smaller districts with student enrollment of less than 10,000 students would be exempted from the notification requirement.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1517 would be an unnecessary mandate on schools, where the focus should be on classroom instruction.