

SUBJECT: Allowing children younger than 14 to read and mark their parents' ballots

COMMITTEE: Elections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Cain, J. González, Beckley, Bucy, Clardy, Fierro, Jetton,
Schofield, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Alicia Bell, Grassroots Gold; Ender Reed, Harris County Commissioners Court; Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; Robert L. Green, Travis County Republican Party Election Integrity Committee; and 19 individuals)

Against — Alexie Swirsky; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Christina Drewry, Texas Nationalist Movement; Terry Lynch, True Texas Project; and 17 individuals)

On — Zenobia Joseph; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Christina Adkins, Texas Secretary of State; Lori Gallagher)

BACKGROUND: Election Code sec. 64.002(b) allows a child under 18 years of age to accompany the child's parent to a voting station.

DIGEST: CSHB 1300 would amend Election Code sec. 64.002(b) to allow a child under 14 years of age to read or mark a ballot at the direction of the child's parent. Such a reading or marking of a ballot would not constitute assisting a voter.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 1300 would help instill civics and a respect for the voting process in young people by allowing children younger than 14 to read or mark their parent's ballot at the direction of the parent. Children under 18 may accompany their parents to the polls, and the bill would simply ensure that

parents could exercise the right to teach their children about the rights and duties of voting as an American. It also would enable children to help visually impaired or otherwise differently abled parents exercise their right to vote.

The bill would not complicate or delay voting procedures because children would simply be marking the parent's ballot, not performing complex tasks on voting equipment. It would not create opportunities for voter fraud since children are unlikely to covertly change their parents' votes and would act at the direction of the parent.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 1300 could lead to unintended delays in voting and could open the door to voter fraud by allowing a person other than the voter to mark a ballot. Children should not be allowed to handle voting machines, as any error could lead to delays in voting and require intervention from poll workers to fix. The bill also would open the door to fraud by allowing a person other than the individual casting a vote to mark a ballot.

**OTHER
CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 1300 should not be limited to children accompanying parents in voting but should be broadened to encompass children accompanying their grandparents or other individuals acting in loco parentis.