

- SUBJECT:** Creating a UIL sports program for students with disabilities
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 12 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allen, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, Meza, Talarico, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — M. González
- WITNESSES:** For — Quinn Meyer, Down by the Border; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Prisci Roca Tipton; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jennifer Toon, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Hillary Lilly, San Antonio Independent School District; Micaela Williams, Spark Change Project; Christine Broughal, Texans for Special Education Reform; Amanda Afifi, Texas Association of School Psychologists; Aaron Gregg, Texas Association of the Deaf; Starlee Coleman, Texas Public Charter Schools Association; Emeline Lakrout; Thomas Parkinson; Calvin Tillman; Al Zito)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools)
- On — Jamey Harrison, UIL; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Lisa Flores, Easterseals Central Texas; Eric Marin, Monica Martinez, and Justin Porter, Texas Education Agency)
- BACKGROUND:** School districts may, but are not required to, provide inclusive sports programs for students with disabilities. Interested parties contend that the University Interscholastic League should establish an inclusive sports program so that students with disabilities have opportunities, similar to those enjoyed by other students, to participate in team athletic activities.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2193 would require the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to ensure that students with disabilities had an opportunity to participate in

team athletic activities by establishing and maintaining an inclusive sports program. The bill would be known as Zariah's Law.

UIL would have to adopt rules to establish, maintain, and expand the inclusive sports program. The rules would have to:

- accommodate inclusive team sports offered through the program at participating public middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools;
- establish eligibility requirements for participation in each inclusive team sport offered through the program;
- identify best practices for school districts to incorporate inclusive sports; and
- require the program to incorporate activities that promoted bullying prevention, moral intelligence, character development, leadership development, physical fitness, and positive school culture.

In adopting the rules, UIL would have to consider and incorporate as appropriate:

- federal guidance regarding access to extracurricular athletics for students with disabilities;
- guidance available from nationally recognized organizations that promoted inclusion and acceptance among students with and without disabilities;
- information regarding inclusive sports programs that had been successfully implemented in Texas, in other states, and by nonprofit organizations;
- input from school districts and the Texas Education Agency; and
- guidance provided by impacted stakeholders, including by parents of students with disabilities.

In maintaining the inclusive sports program, UIL would have to require, to the greatest extent possible, that students who participated in the program were subject to the same rules and requirements as students who participated in other UIL athletic programs, including grade and discipline

requirements and student safety requirements. UIL also would have to require, to the greatest extent possible, that team sports provided through the program were organized similarly to other UIL athletic programs, including with respect to team practices, seasonal play, and local and statewide competitions.

In addition to using funds made available or appropriated for the program, UIL or an affiliated partner could accept gifts, grants, or monetary donations from public and private sources.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021