

- SUBJECT:** Establishing system to share cybersecurity information between schools
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, Talarico, VanDeaver
- 2 nays — Allen, Meza
- 1 absent — M. González
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 20 — 28-3 (Creighton, Kolkhorst, Nichols)
- WITNESSES:** No public hearing.
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 11.175 requires each school district to adopt a cybersecurity policy to secure district cyberinfrastructure against cyberattacks and other cybersecurity incidents and determine cybersecurity risk and implement mitigation planning.
- The district's cybersecurity coordinator is required to report to the Texas Education Agency any cybersecurity incident against district cyberinfrastructure that constitutes a breach of system security as soon as practicable after the discovery of the attack or incident.
- Concerns were raised about the cybersecurity of public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools after schools began shifting to online courses and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have suggested establishing a system for the sharing of information regarding cyber attacks or other cybersecurity incidents occurring in schools.
- DIGEST:** CSSB 1696 would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in coordination with the Department of Information Resources, to establish and maintain a system to coordinate the anonymous sharing of information concerning cyberattacks or other cybersecurity incidents between participating schools and the state.

The system would have to:

- include each report of a cybersecurity incident that constituted a breach of system security;
- provide for such reports to be shared between participating schools in as close to real time as possible; and
- preserve a reporting school's anonymity by preventing the disclosure through the system of the school's name at which an incident occurred.

In establishing the system, TEA could contract with a qualified third party to administer the system.

The bill would require an open-enrollment charter school, in addition to a school district, to report to TEA or, if applicable, the entity administering the system established under the bill any cybersecurity incident that constituted a break of system security.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.