

SUBJECT: Providing public school transportation to students residing out of district

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, Talarico, VanDeaver

4 nays — Allen, Allison, K. King, Meza

1 absent — M. González

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 12 — 26-5 (Eckhardt, Johnson, Miles, Seliger, West)

WITNESSES: No public hearing.

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 34.007 allows the board of trustees of a county school or school district to establish and operate a public school transportation system in the county or district, or outside the county or district through an interlocal contract.

Interested parties have suggested that pursuing interlocal contracts raises unnecessary barriers to school choice. If a county or school district is unable to agree on a contract, the district has to apply for a waiver from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), which is an additional burdensome step and further impacts school choice.

DIGEST: SB 204 would allow a board of county school trustees or a school district board of trustees to establish and operate an economical public school transportation system outside the county or district if students served by the county system or enrolled in the school district reside outside the county or district.

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, 2021.

NOTES: The House companion bill, HB 3129 by Huberty, was considered by the House Public Education Committee in a public hearing on March 30, reported favorably, and sent to the Calendars Committee on April 12.