

Bill Filing Deadline – The deadline for legislators to file bills to be considered by the Texas Senate and House this session was 6:00 p.m. on Friday, March 12, 2021. The filing deadline does not apply to local bills, concurrent resolutions or simple resolutions. A total of 4,728 HB's/HJR's and 2,191 SB's/SJR's were filed for a total of 6,919 bills. 2,629 were filed in the last week. That compares to:

2021 bills filed by the deadline – 6,919 (down 362 from 2019)

2019 bills filed by the deadline – 7,281 (up 627 over 2017)

2017 bills filed by the deadline – 6,654

2015 bills filed by the deadline – 6,107

2013 bills filed by the deadline – 5,665

2011 bills filed by the deadline – 5,672

2009 bills filed by the deadline – 7,136

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

House Public Education Committee – On Tuesday, the House Public Education Committee took up:

HB 129 by Mary Gonzalez (D-El Paso) would require **digital citizenship** and media literacy education for K-12 students. It would add to the definition of “digital citizenship”:

- cyberbullying prevention and response;
- digital ethics, etiquette, safety, and security, including the identification of hate speech, racism and discrimination; and
- media literacy including the ability to identify credible sources of information.

In support were representatives of Texas Association of School Administrators, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas AFT, Texas Impact, Texas PTA, Intercultural Development Research Association, Texas Association of Broadcasters, Decoding Dyslexia, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, and United Ways of Texas. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 159 by Mary Gonzalez (D-El Paso) would require the State Board of Educator Certification to specify what each **educator seeking certification** is expected to know and be able to do, particularly with regard to **students with disabilities**. It would also add a requirement for teacher certification for the person to demonstrate a basic knowledge of each disability category and competence in the use of proactive instructional techniques that provide appropriate accommodations and supports to students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. In support were representatives of Texans for Special Education Reform, Texas Parent to Parent, TCASE, Disability Rights Texas, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Easterseals Texas, The Arc of Texas, Texas Association of Community Schools, Texas Association for

Behavior Analysis Public Policy Group, Intercultural Development Research Association, Texas Parent to Parent, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Academic Language Therapy Association, Decoding Dyslexia, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, Project Lead the Way, Texans Care for Children and two individuals. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 353 by Harold Dutton (D-Houston) would require the closing the gaps domain **indicators for effectiveness** in promoting student learning to include the use of disaggregated data to demonstrate the differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups, including African American and Hispanic students considered as a whole and disaggregated by sex. In support were representatives of Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Public Charter Schools Association, Intercultural Development Research Association, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, and one individual. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 445 by Steve Allison (R-San Antonio) would require the State Board of Education to include the importance of **diversity, equity and inclusion** in the curriculum related to positive character traits. In support were representatives of Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of School Boards, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Public Charter Schools Association, Texas Association of Community Schools, Texas PTA, Texas High School Coaches Association, TCASE, Big Thought, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, Texans Care for Children, United Ways of Texas, Texas Classroom Teachers Association and one individual. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 725 by Jared Patterson (R-Frisco) would grant eligibility for free **pre-kindergarten** programs to children who have been in **foster care** in another state or territory if the child now resides in Texas. In support were representatives of Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of School Boards, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Public Charter Schools Association, Texas AFT, Raise Your Hand Texas, Texas State Teachers Association, Texas Association of Community Schools, Texas PTA, Children at Risk, TexProtects, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, United Ways of Texas, Texas Classroom Teachers Association Texas Pediatric Society, and two individuals. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 759 by Sam Harless (R-Spring) would require Texas Education Agency to establish a **database of student threat assessments** in which there was a determination that a student poses a serious risk of violence to self or others; and allow access to the database to peace officers, school resource officers, principals and superintendents. In support were representatives of Texas Police Chief's Association, Texas School District Police Chief's Association, Raptor Technologies, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, and five individuals. In opposition were representatives of Disability Rights Texas, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, Texas Association of School Psychologists, Austin Justice

Coalition, Citizens Commission on Human Rights, Texas Association of School Psychologists, Citizens Commission on Human Rights Texas, Texans for Special Education Reform, Texas Association of School Boards, Easterseals Texas, The Arc of Texas, Texas Association of Community Schools, Intercultural Development Research Association, Texas Appleseed, Texas Parent to Parent, TCASE, Texans Care for Children, and seven individuals. *It was left pending.*

HB 1080 by Jared Patterson (R-Frisco) would allow **students who receive outpatient mental health services** to participate in University Interscholastic League activities. In support were representatives of Carrollton Springs Changes, Texas Medical Association, Texas Council of Community Centers, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Texans Care for Children, Texas Classroom Teachers Association and one individual. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

HB 1114 by Shawn Thierry (D-Houston) would allow school health care programs to provide **mental health services**. In support were representatives of Texas Association of School Psychologists, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Texans Care for Children, Network of Mental Health Providers, Disability Rights Texas, Texas State Teachers Association, Texas Association of School Administrators, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Association of Community Schools, Texas Council of Community Centers, Texas PTA, Legacy Community Health, TCASE, Harris and Dallas Counties, Mental Health America Greater Houston, United Ways of Texas, Texas Classroom Teachers Association and three individuals. In opposition was a representative of Citizens Commission on Human Rights and three individuals. *It was left pending.*

HB 1603 by Dan Huberty (R-Humble) would remove the sunset date authorizing **individual graduation committees** to satisfy high school graduation requirements for charter schools. In support were representatives of Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas State Teachers Association, Texas Association of School Boards, Texas School Alliance, Association of Texas Professional Educators, Texas Public Charter Schools Association, Texas AFT, Texas Association of Community Schools, Texas PTA, Intercultural Development Research Association, TCASE, MALDEF, Decoding Dyslexia, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, and Texas Classroom Teachers Association. There was no opposition. *It was left pending.*

Senate Education Committee – On Thursday, the Senate Education Committee took up:

SB 89 by Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio) would require school districts to prepare a supplement to the written statement of the **individualized education program** developed for **special education students** indicating whether the written report of the child's full individual and initial evaluation was completed by the date required. *It was left pending.*

SB 178 by Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) would require school districts of 300 or more students (instead of 500) to employ a **school counselor** at each school in the beginning with the 2029-2030 school year; phased in districts with 450 or more students in the 2023-2024 school year; 400 or more students in the 2025-

2056 school year; and 350 or more students in the 2027-2028 school year. *It was left pending.*

SB 179 by Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) would require **school counselors** to spend at least 80 percent of their total work time on direct counseling program services. Time spent in administering assessment instruments would not be considered a direct counseling service. *It was left pending.*

SB 338 by Beverly Powell (D-Burleson) would authorize school districts to adopt uniform general conditions adopted by the Texas Facilities Commission to be incorporated in all of the **school district building construction contracts**. *It was left pending.*

SB 442 by Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola) would require local **school health advisory councils** to adopt a policy establishing a process for the adoption of **curriculum** or materials for the district's **human sexuality instruction** and to provide a process for public meetings with an opportunity for public comment. *It was left pending.*

Voted From Committee:

HB 411 by Julie Johnson (D-Carrollton) would direct the Legislative Council and state agencies to avoid using the phrases "admission, review, and dismissal committee" or "ARD committee" and instead use the preferred phrases "**individualized education program team**" or "IEP team." *It was voted out favorably from the House Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee.*

HB 690 by Will Metcalf (R-Conroe) would require the State Board of Education to require a **trustee** to complete **training on school safety** on curriculum and materials developed by the board. *It was voted out favorably from the House Public Education Committee.*

HB 773 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would to add "students who successfully completed a program of study in **career and technical education**" as a student **success indicator**. *It was voted out favorably from the House Public Education Committee.*

HB 1147 by Dan Huberty (R-Humble) would count enlistment in the Texas National Guard as **military readiness**. *It was voted out favorably from the House Public Education Committee.*

Next Week:

Tuesday, March 23, 2021:

8:00 a.m. House Public Education Committee will meet in E1.004 to take up: **HB 144** by Mary Gonzalez (D-El Paso) would require school districts to prepare a supplement to the written statement of the **individualized education program** developed for **special education students** indicating whether the written report of the child's full individual and initial evaluation was completed by the date required.

HB 363 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would require operators that possess any **private student data** to use the unique identifier established by the Texas Student Data System for any account creation, data upload, data transmission, analysis, or reporting to mask all personally identifiable student

information; and would require operators to adhere to a state-required student data sharing agreement.

HB 999 by Diego Bernal (R-San Antonio) would extend **individual graduation committees** to 2023.

HB 2120 by Keith Bell (R-Forney) would require the **complaints process of school districts** to include an initial administrative hearing and an opportunity to appeal the administrative decision following the initial hearing; and unless otherwise agreed to by the parties, provide for a resolution of the complaint no later than 120 calendar days after the date on which the complaint was filed.

HB 2261 by Gene Wu (D-Houston) would allow **municipal management districts** to provide public education facilities and **public education services**.

HB 2287 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would require the Texas Education Agency, in coordination with the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services to establish and maintain an **electronic database of mental health services and trainings** provided by school districts and charters to assist the task force and the institutions of higher education in evaluating mental health services.

HB 2519 by Drew Darby (R-San Angelo) would make several changes regarding the authority of **State Board of Educator Certification**.

HB 2557 by Glenn Rogers (R-Graford) would allow the governing body of school districts or charters to approve a program under which the district or school provides authorization for eligible persons to serve as **school security volunteers**.

HB 2954 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would require the Texas Education Agency, to the extent funds are appropriated to the agency, to establish a **suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention program** for optional implementation at an elementary school campus that has experienced suicide loss.

TAX:

Next Week:

Monday, March 22, 2021:

10:00 a.m. House Ways & Means Committee will meet in Room 140 of the John H. Reagan State Office Building to take up:

HB 1391 by Mayes Middleton (R-Wallisville) would temporarily prohibit property taxing entities from raising taxes if a proposed **tax increase** has been **rejected by the voters**.

STATEWIDE – COVID-19 RESPONSE:

DSHS Weekly Vaccine Distribution Update – On March 12th the Department of State Health Services issued its weekly update on Vaccine distribution in Texas for the week of March 15th. It said, “More than 800,000 first doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be shipped to providers across Texas next week. The Texas Department of State Health Services is allocating 656,810 doses (compared to 929,320 first doses last week) to at least 445 providers (compared to 1,651 providers last week) in 178 counties (compared to 234 counties last week).”

Approximately 200,000 additional first doses will be available to pharmacy locations and federally-qualified health centers directly from the federal government. The allocation is the third largest Texas has received since vaccination began in December. However, it is less than the record of more than 1 million first doses delivered last week. The decrease follows a large amount of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine coming to the state. Smaller amounts of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be available for the next two weeks as production increases. Additionally, the federally-supported sites in Arlington, Dallas and Houston have finished their three-week cycle of first doses and will be administering second doses for the next three weeks. Here are some statistics provided:

- Texas has now administered more than 7.6 million doses, an increase of nearly 1.4 million in the last week.
- More than 5 million people have received at least one dose, up more than a million over last week, and more than 2.7 million are fully vaccinated.
- Among Texas seniors, 55 percent have received at least one dose and about one in three are now fully vaccinated.
- About one in eight of all Texans at least 16 years old are now fully vaccinated.

Texas announced last week that people ages 50 to 64 will be eligible for vaccination beginning March 15th. They were added to health care workers, long-term care residents, people 65 and older, people with chronic health care conditions that may increase their risk of severe COVID-19, and school and child care workers. DSHS estimates that 12 to 14 million Texans will be eligible to be vaccinated as of next week. In addition to the first doses mentioned above, the state is ordering 578,320 doses intended as the second dose (compared to 457,000 second doses last week) for people first vaccinated a few weeks ago. DSHS automatically orders second doses to arrive at providers in the week they can begin to be administered, so they will be available when needed. People should be able to return to the same provider to receive their second dose within six weeks of getting the first.