AN ACT

relating to a sexual assault policy at certain public and private institutions of higher education and to requiring those institutions to provide students and employees an option to electronically report certain offenses to the institution.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 51.9363, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 51.9363. [CAMPUS] SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY. (a) In this section, "postsecondary educational institution" means an [in]stitution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education, as those terms are defined ["has the meaning assigned"] by Section 61.003.

(b) Each postsecondary educational institution [of higher education] shall adopt a policy on [campus] sexual assault applicable to each student enrolled at and each employee of the institution. The policy must:

(1) include:

(A) definitions of prohibited behavior;

(B) sanctions for violations; and

(C) the protocol for reporting and responding to reports of [campus] sexual assault; and

(2) be approved by the institution's governing board before final adoption by the institution.
(c) Each postsecondary educational institution [of higher education] shall make the institution's [campus] sexual assault policy available to students, faculty, and staff members by:

(1) including the policy in the institution's student handbook and personnel handbook; and

(2) creating and maintaining a web page on the institution's Internet website dedicated solely to the policy.

(d) Each postsecondary educational institution [of higher education] shall require each entering freshman or undergraduate transfer student to attend an orientation on the institution's [campus] sexual assault policy before or during the first semester or term in which the student is enrolled at the institution. The institution shall establish the format and content of the orientation.

(e) Each postsecondary educational institution shall develop and implement a public awareness campaign to inform students enrolled at and employees of the institution of the institution's sexual assault policy. As part of the campaign, the institution shall provide to students information regarding the protocol for reporting incidents of sexual assault adopted under Subsection (b), including the name, office location, and contact information of the institution's Title IX coordinator, by:

(1) e-mailing the information to each student at the beginning of each semester or other academic term; and

(2) including the information in the orientation required under Subsection (d).

(f) As part of the protocol for responding to reports of
sexual assault adopted under Subsection (b), each postsecondary educational institution shall:

(1) to the greatest extent practicable based on the number of counselors employed by the institution, ensure that each alleged victim or alleged perpetrator of an incident of sexual assault and any other person who reports such an incident are offered counseling provided by a counselor who does not provide counseling to any other person involved in the incident; and

(2) notwithstanding any other law, allow an alleged victim or alleged perpetrator of an incident of sexual assault to drop a course in which both parties are enrolled without any academic penalty.

(g) Each biennium, each postsecondary educational institution [of higher education] shall review the institution's [campus] sexual assault policy and, with approval of the institution's governing board, revise the policy as necessary.

SECTION 2. Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.9365 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.9365. ELECTRONIC REPORTING OPTION FOR CERTAIN OFFENSES. (a) In this section:

(1) " Dating violence" means abuse or violence, or a threat of abuse or violence, against a person with whom the actor has or has had a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature.

(2) "Postsecondary educational institution" means an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education, as those terms are defined by
Section 61.003.

(3) "Sexual assault" means sexual contact or intercourse with a person without the person's consent, including sexual contact or intercourse against the person's will or in a circumstance in which the person is incapable of consenting to the contact or intercourse.

(4) "Sexual harassment" means unwelcome, sex-based verbal or physical conduct that:

(A) in the employment context, unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; or

(B) in the education context, is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from educational programs or activities.

(5) "Stalking" means a course of conduct directed at a person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or to suffer substantial emotional distress.

(b) Each postsecondary educational institution shall provide an option for a student enrolled at or an employee of the institution to electronically report to the institution an allegation of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking committed against or witnessed by the student or employee, regardless of the location at which the alleged offense occurred.

(c) The electronic reporting option provided under Subsection (b) must:
enable a student or employee to report the alleged
offense anonymously; and

be easily accessible through a clearly
identifiable link on the postsecondary educational institution's
Internet website home page.

(d) A protocol for reporting sexual assault adopted under
Section 51.9363 must comply with this section.

(e) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board may adopt
rules as necessary to administer this section.

(f) The commissioner of higher education shall establish an
advisory committee to recommend to the Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board rules for adoption under Subsection (e). The
advisory committee consists of nine members appointed by the
commissioner. Each member must be a chief executive officer of a
postsecondary educational institution or a representative
designated by that officer. Not later than December 1, 2017, the
advisory committee shall submit the committee's recommendations to
the coordinating board. This subsection expires September 1, 2018.

SECTION 3. Section 51.9363, Education Code, as amended by
this Act, applies beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year.

SECTION 4. Not later than January 1, 2018, each public or
private postsecondary educational institution shall provide the
electronic reporting option required under Section 51.9365,
Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
1 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
2 Act takes effect September 1, 2017.
S.B. No. 968

President of the Senate
Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 968 passed the Senate on April 10, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 30, Nays 1; May 25, 2017, Senate refused to concur in House amendments and requested appointment of Conference Committee; May 26, 2017, House granted request of the Senate; May 28, 2017, Senate adopted Conference Committee Report by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 968 passed the House, with amendments, on May 20, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 124, Nays 12, one present not voting; May 26, 2017, House granted request of the Senate for appointment of Conference Committee; May 28, 2017, House adopted Conference Committee Report by the following vote: Yeas 120, Nays 27, two present not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

Date

Governor