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By:  Zaffirini S.B. No. 1624

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the licensing and regulation of driver education schools and instructors; authorizing fees.

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

SECTION 1.  Section 1001.001(7), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(7)  "Driver education school" means an enterprise that:

(A)  maintains a place of business or solicits business in this state; and

(B)  is operated by an individual, association, partnership, or corporation for educating and training persons [~~at a primary or branch location~~] in driver education or driver education instructor development.

SECTION 2.  Section 1001.151(e), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(e)  The commission may establish a fee for an application for approval to offer a driver education course [~~by an alternative method of instruction under Section 1001.3541~~].

SECTION 3.  Section 1001.204(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  The department shall approve an application for a driver education school license if the application is submitted on a form approved by the department [~~executive director~~], the application is accompanied by [~~includes~~] the fee, and the department determines [~~on inspection of the premises of the school, it is determined~~] that the school:

(1)  has courses, curricula, and instruction of a quality, content, and length that reasonably and adequately achieve the stated objective for which the courses, curricula, and instruction are offered;

(2)  has adequate space, equipment, instructional material, and instructors to provide training of good quality in the classroom and behind the wheel, if applicable;

(3)  has instructors who have adequate educational qualifications and experience;

(4)  provides to each student before enrollment:

(A)  a copy of:

(i)  the refund policy;

(ii)  the schedule of tuition, fees, and other charges; and

(iii)  the regulations relating to absence, grading policy, and rules of operation and conduct; and

(B)  the department's name, mailing address, telephone number, and Internet website address for the purpose of directing complaints to the department;

(5)  maintains adequate records as prescribed by the department to show attendance and progress or grades and enforces satisfactory standards relating to attendance, progress, and conduct;

(6)  on completion of training, issues each student a certificate indicating the course name and satisfactory completion;

(7)  complies with all county, municipal, state, and federal regulations, including fire, building, and sanitation codes and assumed name registration, if applicable;

(8)  is financially sound and capable of fulfilling its commitments for training;

(9)  maintains and publishes as part of its student enrollment contract the proper policy for the refund of the unused portion of tuition, fees, and other charges if a student fails to take the course or withdraws or is discontinued from the school at any time before completion;

(10)  does not use erroneous or misleading advertising, either by actual statement, omission, or intimation, as determined by the department;

(11)  does not use a name similar to the name of another existing school or tax-supported educational institution in this state, unless specifically approved in writing by the executive director;

(12)  submits to the department for approval the applicable course hour lengths and curriculum content for each course offered by the school;

(13)  does not owe an administrative penalty for a violation of this chapter; [~~and~~]

(14)  meets any additional criteria required by the department, including any applicable inspection requirements; and

(15)  provides adequate testing and security measures for the school's method of instruction.

SECTION 4.  Subchapter F, Chapter 1001, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 1001.2531, 1001.2532, 1001.2533, 1001.2534, and 1001.2535 to read as follows:

Sec. 1001.2531.  DRIVER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR REQUIREMENTS. (a) The commission by rule shall establish standards for a driver education instructor to be certified as a teaching assistant, driver education teacher, or supervising teacher.

(b)  An applicant for a driver education instructor license under this section must:

(1)  apply to the department on a form prescribed by the department and under rules adopted by the commission;

(2)  submit with the application a nonrefundable application fee in an amount set by commission rule; and

(3)  present satisfactory evidence to the department that the applicant:

(A)  is at least 21 years of age;

(B)  holds a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate; and

(C)  meets any other requirement established by commission rule.

Sec. 1001.2532.  TEACHING ASSISTANT. (a) A teaching assistant is a driver education instructor who is authorized to teach or provide only behind-the-wheel training.

(b)  To be eligible to be certified as a teaching assistant, a driver education instructor must:

(1)  have successfully completed:

(A)  six semester hours of driver and traffic safety education from an accredited college or university; or

(B)  a teaching assistant development course approved by the department; and

(2)  pass any required examination.

Sec. 1001.2533.  DRIVER EDUCATION TEACHER. (a) A driver education teacher is a driver education instructor who is authorized to teach or provide behind-the-wheel training and classroom training.

(b)  To be eligible to be certified as a driver education teacher, a driver education instructor must:

(1)  have successfully completed:

(A)  nine semester hours of driver and traffic safety education from an accredited college or university; or

(B)  a driver education teacher development course approved by the department;

(2)  pass any required examination; and

(3)  comply with the additional requirements under Section 1001.2535.

Sec. 1001.2534.  SUPERVISING TEACHER. (a) A supervising teacher is a driver education instructor who is authorized to teach instructor training classes.

(b)  To be eligible to be certified as a supervising teacher, a driver education instructor must:

(1)  have been certified as a driver education teacher for at least one year; and

(2)  have successfully completed:

(A)  15 semester hours of driver and traffic safety education from an accredited college or university; or

(B)  a supervising teacher development course approved by the department; and

(3)  comply with the additional requirements under Section 1001.2535.

Sec. 1001.2535.  ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DRIVER EDUCATION TEACHER AND SUPERVISING TEACHER. (a) In addition to the requirements under Section 1001.2533 or 1001.2534, as applicable, to be eligible to be certified as a driver education teacher or supervising teacher, a driver education instructor must:

(1)  hold a teaching certificate and any additional certification required by commission rule to teach driver education;

(2)  have completed 15 semester hours in education courses at an accredited college or university during the 10 years before the application date; or

(3)  have obtained an associate or baccalaureate degree in education from an accredited college or university.

(b)  The commission, department, or executive director may adopt an alternative method to determine or verify an instructor's eligibility under Subsection (a).

SECTION 5.  Subchapter H, Chapter 1001, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 1001.3542 to read as follows:

Sec. 1001.3542.  METHOD OF INSTRUCTION FOR DRIVER EDUCATION COURSE. A driver education school may teach a driver education course by any method approved by the department, including an alternative method under Section 1001.3541 or a traditional method under Subchapter C.

SECTION 6.  The following provisions of the Education Code are repealed:

(1)  Sections 1001.253, 1001.254, and 1001.256; and

(2)  Section 1001.3541(b).

SECTION 7.  (a) As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Commission on Licensing and Regulation shall adopt rules to implement Section 1001.204(b), Education Code, as amended by this Act, and Section 1001.2531, Education Code, as added by this Act.

(b)  A driver education instructor license issued under Section 1001.253, Education Code, before the repeal of that section by this Act, continues to be valid until the license expires, and former Section 1001.253, Education Code, is continued in effect for that purpose.

(c)  A person who holds on the effective date of this Act a driver education instructor license described by former Section 1001.253(b), Education Code, is entitled on expiration of that license to issuance of a driver education instructor license certified as a teaching assistant under Section 1001.2532, Education Code, as added by this Act, if the person otherwise meets the requirements for renewal of a driver education instructor license certified as a teaching assistant.

(d)  A person who holds on the effective date of this Act a driver education instructor license described by former Section 1001.253(c), Education Code, is entitled on expiration of that license to issuance of a driver education instructor license certified as a driver education teacher under Section 1001.2533, Education Code, as added by this Act, if the person otherwise meets the requirements for renewal of a driver education instructor license certified as a driver education teacher.

(e)  A person who holds on the effective date of this Act a driver education instructor license described by former Section 1001.253(e), Education Code, is entitled on expiration of that license to issuance of a driver education instructor license certified as a supervising teacher under Section 1001.2534, Education Code, as added by this Act, if the person otherwise meets the requirements for renewal of a driver education instructor license certified as a supervising teacher.

(f)  The changes in law made by this Act do not affect the validity of a disciplinary action or other proceeding that was initiated before the effective date of this Act and that is pending before a court or other governmental entity on the effective date of this Act.

(g)  Sections 1001.2531, 1001.2532, 1001.2533, 1001.2534, and 1001.2535, Education Code, as added by this Act, apply only to an application for, or renewal of, an instructor license submitted to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation on or after the effective date of this Act. An application submitted before that date is governed by the law in effect when the application was submitted, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.