A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to prohibited COVID-19 vaccine mandates and vaccination status discrimination and to exemptions from certain vaccine requirements.

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

SECTION 1. Section 161.0085, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Subsection (b-1) and amending Subsection (e) to read as follows:

(b-1) A governmental entity in this state may not require an individual to provide any documentation certifying the individual's COVID-19 vaccination or post-transmission recovery on entry to, to gain access to, or to receive service from the governmental entity.

(e) This section may not be construed to:

(1) restrict a business or governmental entity from implementing COVID-19 screening and infection control protocols in accordance with state and federal law to protect public health; or

(2) interfere with an individual's right to access the individual's personal health information under federal law.

SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 161, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Section 161.0086 to read as follows:

Sec. 161.0086. PROHIBITION ON POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS MANDATING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS. (a) In this section, "COVID-19" means the 2019 novel coronavirus disease.
(b) Notwithstanding any other law, including Chapter 81 of this code and Chapter 418, Government Code, a political subdivision of this state may not issue an order, adopt an ordinance, or otherwise require an individual to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

SECTION 3. Section 38.001(b), Education Code, as amended by Chapters 43 (H.B. 1098) and 94 (H.B. 1059), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, is reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(b) Subject to Subsections (b-1), (b-2), and (c), the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission may modify or delete any of the immunizations in Subsection (a) or may require immunizations against additional diseases as a requirement for admission to any elementary or secondary school.

SECTION 4. Section 38.001, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsection (b-2) to read as follows:

(b-2) An elementary or secondary school may not require a student, as a condition of the student's admission to or continued enrollment in the school, to be vaccinated against the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

SECTION 5. Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.91921 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.91921. PROHIBITION ON PRIVATE OR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION MANDATING COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR STUDENTS. (a) In this section:

(1) "COVID-19" means the 2019 novel coronavirus disease.

(2) "Private or independent institution of higher education" means an educational institution, as defined by Section 51.802, that is not operated, controlled, or supported by the state of Texas or a political subdivision of the state of Texas.
education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) A private or independent institution of higher education may not require a student, as a condition of the student's admission to or continued enrollment in the institution, to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

SECTION 6. Section 51.933, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (b-2) to read as follows:

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (b-2), the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission may require immunizations against the diseases listed in Subsection (a) and additional diseases for students at any institution of higher education who are pursuing a course of study in a human or animal health profession, and the executive commissioner may require those immunizations for any students in times of an emergency or epidemic in a county where the commissioner of state health services has declared such an emergency or epidemic.

(b-2) An institution of higher education may not require a student, as a condition of the student's admission to or continued enrollment in the institution, to be vaccinated against the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

SECTION 7. Chapter 21, Labor Code, is amended by adding Subchapter H-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER H-1. DISCRIMINATION BASED ON EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED COVID-19 VACCINATION

Sec. 21.421. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "COVID-19" means the 2019 novel coronavirus disease.
Sec. 21.422. EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED COVID-19 VACCINATION.
An employer, labor organization, or employment agency shall allow an individual to claim an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination based on a medical condition or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief.

Sec. 21.423. PROHIBITED DISCRIMINATION BASED ON EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED COVID-19 VACCINATION. (a) An employer commits an unlawful employment practice if the employer fails or refuses to hire, discharges, or otherwise discriminates against an individual with respect to the compensation or the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the individual claims an exemption described by Section 21.422.

(b) A labor organization commits an unlawful employment practice if the labor organization excludes or expels from membership or otherwise discriminates against an individual because the individual claims an exemption described by Section 21.422.

(c) An employment agency commits an unlawful employment practice if the employment agency classifies or refers for employment, fails or refuses to refer for employment, or otherwise discriminates against an individual because the individual claims an exemption described by Section 21.422.

Sec. 21.424. COVID-19 VACCINATION EXEMPTION AFFIDAVIT FORM. (a) An employee claiming an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination must complete and provide to the employee's employer an affidavit on a form described by Subsection (e) stating the reason for the exemption.
(b) The affidavit must be signed by the employee claiming the exemption or, if the employee is a minor, the employee's parent, managing conservator, or guardian, and the affidavit must be notarized.

(c) On request of an employee, an employer shall provide to the employee a blank copy of the vaccination exemption affidavit form described by Subsection (e).

(d) On receipt of an employee's signed and notarized affidavit claiming the exemption, the employer shall exempt the employee from receiving a required COVID-19 vaccination.

(e) The commission shall develop and make available on the commission's Internet website a blank affidavit form to be used by an employee who claims an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination. The content of the affidavit form must be the same or substantially similar to the affidavit form developed under Section 161.0041, Health and Safety Code, except that the form is not required to contain a seal or other security device under Subsection (d) of that section.

SECTION 8. Section 224.002(c), Health and Safety Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c) The policy shall include procedures for a covered individual to be exempt from the required vaccines based on reasons of conscience, including a religious belief.

SECTION 9. Subchapter H-1, Chapter 21, Labor Code, as added by this Act, applies only to an unlawful employment practice that occurs on or after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 10. (a) The changes in law made by this Act to
Title 2, Education Code, apply beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

(b) The changes in law made by this Act to Title 3, Education Code, apply beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year.

SECTION 11. 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 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect on the 91st day after the last day of the legislative session.