

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 129
By: González, Mary
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerned persons note that our children regularly encounter cyberbullying, often do not know how to conduct themselves respectfully in online environments, have difficulty navigating the Internet in a healthy manner, and sometimes cannot identify credible sources of information. Current law requires that school districts incorporate instruction in "digital citizenship" into curriculum. C.S.H.B. 129 specifies the elements of such instruction in greater detail and requires related instruction be included in the sixth grade social studies curriculum.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 129 amends the Education Code to require the State Board of Education to require students enrolled in grade level six to complete instruction in digital citizenship as part of a public school district's social studies curriculum. The bill includes the following subjects in the definition of "digital citizenship" for purposes of the curriculum:

- media literacy and the ability to identify credible sources of information;
- digital ethics, etiquette, respectful discourse with people who have differing opinions, safety, security, digital footprint, and the identification of rhetoric that incites violence based on a person's race, religion, or political affiliation; and
- cyberbullying prevention and response.

The bill applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 129 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

With respect to the bill's definition of "digital citizenship," the substitute includes in the definition respectful discourse with people who have differing opinions, digital footprint, and

the identification of rhetoric that incites violence based on a person's race, religion, or political affiliation but does not include in the definition the identification of hate speech, racism, and discrimination.

The substitute replaces the requirement for the State Board of Education (SBOE) to require the curriculum for the foundation high school program to include the successful completion of one credit in digital citizenship with a requirement for SBOE to require students enrolled in grade level six to complete instruction in digital citizenship as part of a public school district's social studies curriculum.