

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3489
By: Parker
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Although technology continues to serve as a vital and beneficial tool in a child's education, it has been suggested students need to be protected from harmful or improper use of technology in school classrooms. C.S.H.B. 3489 seeks to ensure public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools address the increasing role of technology in classrooms and requires the Texas Education Agency, in consultation with the Health and Human Services Commission, to develop model best health and safety guidelines for the effective integration of digital devices in public schools.

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. 3489 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in consultation with the Health and Human Services Commission, to develop and distribute beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, model health and safety guidelines that public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may use to determine best practices for the effective integration of digital devices in public schools. The guidelines must meet the following requirements:

- be based on evidence-based studies and practices;
- consider the needs of students with intellectual or physical disabilities;
- consider the potential costs of implementation of the guidelines and affordable ways to reduce the hazards associated with the extended use of digital devices; and
- address specified issue areas.

The bill requires the school board of each district or the governing body of each charter school to adopt a policy for the effective integration of digital devices in the district or school. In adopting the policy, the school board or governing body may decide whether to adopt the guidelines developed under the bill.

Each district or charter school that adopts such guidelines must post the guidelines publicly on the district or charter school's website but may implement the guidelines in a manner that best meets the district's or charter school's individual needs and the individual needs of students, including students with intellectual or physical disabilities.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3489 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.

The substitute requires the health and safety guidelines developed by TEA to meet the following requirements, which did not appear in the original:

- to consider the needs of students with intellectual or physical disabilities; and
- to address recommended practices or software to block access to inappropriate content.

The substitute includes a requirement not in the original for the school board of each public school district and governing body of each open-enrollment charter school to adopt a policy for the effective integration of digital devices. The substitute includes a specification not in the original that a district or charter school may implement the TEA guidelines in a manner that best meets the individual needs of students, including students with intellectual or physical disabilities.

The substitute does not include the requirement that appeared in the original for a district or charter school that adopts the TEA guidelines to provide a copy of the guidelines with registration materials and to require a signature acknowledging receipt of the guidelines.