

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 279
By: Hinojosa
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Student mental health issues have been on the rise, with suicide now one of the leading causes of death among teens and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24. In addition to the recurrent issues regarding student mental health, the mental stressors that contribute to suicide have only been exacerbated due to remote learning requirements and social distancing conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given these stressors, there have been calls for more emphasis on mental health support services in Texas schools. C.S.S.B. 279 seeks to provide streamlined access to mental health support services to students by providing for the inclusion of suicide prevention information on certain student identification cards issued by public schools and public institutions of higher education in Texas.

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.S.B. 279 amends the Education Code to require each student identification card issued by a public school to a student in grade six or higher or by a public institution of higher education to have printed on the card the contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line. The card may also include, as applicable, the contact information for a local suicide prevention hotline, the campus police department or security or a local nonemergency police contact, and the campus health clinic or a local health clinic.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 279 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the engrossed required each student identification card issued by a public school to a student in grade seven or higher to have printed on either side of the card the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and authorized the telephone number for the Crisis Text Line and an available local suicide prevention hotline to be printed on either side of the card, the substitute requires each such card issued to a student in grade six or higher instead to have printed on the card the contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

and the Crisis Text Line, and authorizes the contact information for an available local suicide prevention hotline to be printed on the card, without any specification as to location.

Whereas the engrossed required each student identification card issued by a public institution of higher education to have printed on either side of the card the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the applicable campus police department or security or police contact and authorized the telephone number for the Crisis Text Line and an available local suicide prevention hotline to be printed on either side of the card, the substitute requires each such card to have printed on the card instead the contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Crisis Text Line, and authorizes the contact information for the applicable campus police department or security or police contact and an available local suicide prevention hotline to be printed on the card, without any specification as to location. The substitute includes an authorization absent from the engrossed for the contact information for the applicable campus health clinic or a local health clinic to be printed on the card.

The substitute does not include an authorization present in the engrossed for an applicable public school or a public institution of higher education that on January 1, 2022, has a supply of unissued, noncompliant student identification cards to issue those cards until the supply of cards is depleted.

The engrossed established that the bill's provisions apply only to an initial or replacement student identification card issued on or after June 1, 2022, whereas the substitute establishes that the bill's provisions apply only to a student identification card issued on or after the bill's effective date.