

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 776
By: Lucio
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, Texas leaves the decision of the use and expansion of inclusive sports by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to school districts at the local level. This means that each district can decide how many inclusive programs will be provided, if any. In addition, even though districts can provide inclusive programs, the UIL does not have a year-round league where students with intellectual disabilities can participate as they might in other student leagues. Parents of students with intellectual disabilities believe that it is time for their children to have the same opportunities in athletics as their peers. S.B. 776 seeks to address this issue by requiring the UIL to ensure students with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to participate in team athletic activities by establishing and maintaining an inclusive sports program.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the University Interscholastic League in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 776 amends the Education Code to require the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to ensure students with intellectual disabilities have an opportunity to participate in team athletic activities by establishing and maintaining an inclusive sports program. The bill requires the UIL to adopt rules as necessary to establish, maintain, and expand the program. The rules must do the following:

- accommodate inclusive team sports offered through the program at participating public middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools in Texas;
- establish eligibility requirements for participation in each inclusive team sport offered through the program;
- identify best practices for public school districts to incorporate inclusive sports; and
- require the program to incorporate activities that promote specified values.

S.B. 776 sets out the guidance, information, and input the UIL must consider and incorporate in adopting those rules, including guidance by impacted stakeholders such as parents of or persons standing in parental relation to students with intellectual disabilities, and authorizes the UIL to appoint a person to provide that stakeholder guidance. The bill requires the UIL to require the following in maintaining the inclusive sports program, to the greatest extent possible:

- that students who participate in the program be subject to the same rules and requirements as students who participate in other athletic programs offered by the UIL,

including certain grade and disciplinary requirements and student safety requirements related to athletic activities; and

- that team sports provided through the program be organized similarly to other athletic programs offered by the UIL, including with respect to team practices, seasonal play, and local and statewide competitions.

S.B. 776 authorizes the UIL or an affiliated partner, in addition to using funds available or appropriated for the purpose, to seek and accept gifts, grants, or donations of money from public and private sources for the purpose of establishing or expanding the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.