

By: Lucio

S.B. No. 776

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of an adaptive sports program by the University Interscholastic League to provide students with disabilities access to team sports.

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

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as Zariah's Law.

SECTION 2. Subchapter D, Chapter 33, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 33.097 to read as follows:

Sec. 33.097. ADAPTIVE SPORTS PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. (a) The University Interscholastic League shall ensure students with disabilities have an opportunity to participate in team athletic activities by establishing an adaptive sports program. In establishing the adaptive sports program, the league shall consider and incorporate as appropriate:

(1) federal guidance regarding providing access to extracurricular athletics for students with disabilities;

(2) guidance available from nationally recognized organizations that provide or promote adaptive athletics;

(3) information regarding adaptive sports programs that have been successfully implemented in other states or by nonprofit organizations; and

(4) input from school districts and the agency.

(b) In establishing the adaptive sports program, the University Interscholastic League shall, to the greatest extent

1 possible, require:

2 (1) students who participate in the program to be
3 subject to the same rules and requirements as students who
4 participate in other athletic programs offered by the league,
5 including:

6 (A) grade and disciplinary requirements under
7 Section 33.081(c); and

8 (B) requirements related to student safety in
9 athletic activities under this chapter and Chapter 38; and

10 (2) team sports provided through the program to be
11 organized similarly to other athletic programs offered by the
12 league, including with respect to team practices, seasonal play,
13 and local and statewide competitions.

14 (c) In addition to using funds appropriated for the purpose,
15 the University Interscholastic League may seek and accept gifts,
16 grants, or donations of money from public and private sources for
17 the purpose of establishing or expanding the adaptive sports
18 program.

19 (d) The University Interscholastic League shall adopt rules
20 as necessary to establish, maintain, and expand the adaptive sports
21 program. The rules must:

22 (1) require that team sports offered through the
23 program be available to students at public middle schools, junior
24 high schools, and high schools in the state;

25 (2) establish eligibility requirements for
26 participation in each team sport offered through the program; and

27 (3) identify best practices for school districts to

1 incorporate adaptive sports.

2 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.