

SUBJECT: Creating standards for students using electronic devices in public schools

COMMITTEE: Youth Health & Safety, Select — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Thompson, Hull, Allison, Dutton, Jr., Johnson, King, Lozano

0 nays

2 absent — Capriglione, Landgraf

WITNESSES: For — Lee Spiller, Citizens Commission on Human Rights; Carrie Moore, Texas Education 911; Citizens Defending Freedom

*(Registered, but did not testify: Judy Powell, Parent Guidance Center; Jill Glover, Republican Party of Texas; Karen Marshall, State Republican Executive Committee, LP Committee; Pamela McPeters, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Paul Hale; Rob McCarthy; Summer Wise;)*

Against — *(Registered, but did not testify: Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA)*

On — *(Registered, but did not testify: Eric Marin, Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)*

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that additional requirements for the issuance of school devices to students could help to address concerns about the safety and security of these devices.

DIGEST: CSHB 2673 would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to adopt specific standards for the use and transfer of electronic devices to students by public schools.

Under CSHB 2673, The Texas Education Agency would be required to institute standards for electronic devices and software used by public schools and charter schools. These standards would:

- minimize student data collection through electronic devices and software applications;
- require direct and informed parental consent for student use;
- require direct and informed parental consent for software applications to conduct assessments unrelated to education;
- provide parents with resources to understand cybersecurity and online safety risks for their child using electronic devices;
- specify time periods during which an electronic device transferred to a student would have to be deactivated for safety reasons;
- limit electronic device use in classrooms to age-appropriate levels;
- consider reasonable limitations on student access to social media when using an electronic device provided by the school;
- require schools to check if more secure alternatives to social media are available for educational purposes;
- consider using an Internet filter to alert administrators if students accessed self-harm, suicide, or violent content, so parents could then be informed;
- assign a school officer to receive reports of electronic device use, cybersecurity, and online safety from staff, students, or parents; and
- provide ways for a district or school to ensure that a software application operator complies with certain requirements when it provides software applications.

CSHB 2673 would extend the requirements schools must meet before transferring data processing equipment to students to the transfer of an electronic device, and would additionally require that schools:

- established rules to promote parents as partners in cybersecurity and online safety; and
- installed internet filters on electronic devices to prevent access to pornographic or obscene materials or applications.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.