

SUBJECT: Establishing a firearms safety elective course for public high schools

COMMITTEE: Youth Health & Safety, Select — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — S. Thompson, Hull, Allison, Dutton, A. Johnson, T. King, Lozano

0 nays

2 absent — Capriglione, Landgraf

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tricia Cave, Association of Texas Professional Educators; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; Larry Young, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; Ray Hunt, HPOU; Leesa Ross, Lock Arms for Life; Tara Mica, National Rifle Association; Molly Voyles, Texas Council on Family Violence; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; Chelbi Mims, Texas Public Charter Schools Association; AJ Louderback, Texas Sheriffs Regional Alliance; Mark Borskey, Texas State Rifle Association)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Carl Jacob)

On — Steve Hall, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin, Shelly Ramos, Texas Education Agency; John Scott, Texas Education Agency; Michael Belsick)

BACKGROUND: Concerns have been raised that there are not education courses on firearms safety currently offered in Texas school districts or open-enrollment charter schools. Some have suggested that Texas should create student firearm safety courses detailing accident prevention and protection.

DIGEST: HB 2976 would allow a school district or open-enrollment charter school to offer high school students a one-half elective credit course on firearms safety.

The State Board of Education would be required to develop curriculum

guidelines for the elective course on firearms safety. The curriculum guidelines would be required to:

- focus on accident prevention;
- promote the safety and protection of students;
- emphasize how students should respond when encountering a firearm; and
- include the information contained in the firearms safety portion of the statewide hunter education course administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The State Board of Education also would be required to develop a virtual course on firearms safety. The virtual course would have to be available to the following agencies, which would be required to make the course available for free on their website:

- the Texas Education Agency;
- the Parks and Wildlife Department; and
- the Department of Public Safety.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2023, and the State Board of Education would be required to develop the curriculum guidelines and virtual course as soon as practicable after that date.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have an estimated negative impact of \$455,551 to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2025.