

Keep Schools AND Students Safe

Vote NO on HB 1788 and SB 534

Texas Must Move in a Direction that Prioritizes Student Safety and Success

In the midst of a national reckoning on police accountability and a rise in gun violence, the world has its eyes on the steps that lawmakers will take to ensure people's safety. Discussions about limiting qualified immunity for officers that violate a person's rights are in the halls of every legislative body, including Texas'.

At the same time, we are seeing conversations about solutions to racial disproportionalities in student discipline, and steps towards dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline – which has largely stemmed from the rise of law enforcement on school campuses.

In a moment such as this, **Texas should enact evidence-based solutions to promote student safety, not double down on harmful practices.**

BUT: HB 1788 and SB 534 would expand immunity from liability for harmful actions to private schools and non-employee actors, like volunteer retired police officers. These private entities and individuals do not have protections from liability under the law *precisely because* they are not governmental entities, **nor do non-employees have the specialized training needed to limit the risk of unintended harm to students.**

These Bills Will Cause Confusion, Increase Disproportionalities, and Limit Rights

- These bills are **redundant and confusing**, as they purport to “expand” the legal protections that already exist for school districts, public school employees, and peace officers (including school resource officers) who are acting within the scope of their duties.

Existing immunity standards are being reconsidered in courts and legislatures, including in Texas. These bills will only complicate the issue unnecessarily. Existing immunity provisions must be examined thoughtfully, with the **rights of potential victims of violence and wrongdoing in mind. These bills simply muddy those waters.**

- While the safety of children in schools due to gun violence is a valid and harrowing concern, increasing the number of **police, guns, and security presence on campuses has not proven to be an effective strategy.** Instead, this practice has increased racial disparities in discipline and criminalization of students of color, students with disabilities, and students in foster care.
- Students, families, and teachers **should have the right to bring legal challenges for harmful actions** by school employees, volunteers, police officers, and school marshals.

Promote TRUE Campus Safety: Oppose HB 1788 & SB 534

Proven strategies to promote school safety are rooted in mental health and social-emotional support. Texas should invest in restorative justice disciplinary policies, social workers, and other mental health professionals on campuses to prevent violence and ensure that in our efforts to keep schools safe, we prioritize keeping ALL students safe.

Information Source

IDRA, Ana Ramon and Morgan Craven

The Education Trust – Texas, Jonathan Feinstein

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, Alycia Castillo

Texas Appleseed, Andrew Hairston

The Excellence and Advancement Foundation, Dr. Courtney Robinson