

THSCA LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Home School Bill (HB 547) Has Moved out of the Public Education Committee and Will Now Be Brought to the House Floor for a Vote on Wednesday 5/5/21

H.B. 547, by Rep. James Frank relating to the participation of home school students in U.I.L. Sponsored activities, has passed out of the House Public Education Committee with a substitute allowing more permissive language placing the decision for home-school student participation to be left in the hands of the school districts individually. **This bill will be brought for a vote on the House floor tomorrow morning, Wednesday, May 5th!** It is of extreme importance for all our coaches to **IMMEDIATELY** contact their state representative in the House and the Speaker of the House, Dade Phelan. We are asking you to make a phone call AND email them today; as well as share this alert with your parents, teachers, administrators and all friends of athletics and all extra-curricular activities to help in our efforts to voice opposition to H.B. 547. **We know you are participating in STARR testing right now. Your legislators also know this. Please act quickly!** (We understand that many of you called on our behalf when we attempted to stop this bill in the Public Education Committee AND the House Calendars Committee. **Please call again!**)

We have provided the following bullet points for you to use when calling and emailing in opposition to Home School Participation in all U.I.L. Activities:

- Texas home schools are specifically defined in the Texas Education Code only for eligibility for merit scholarship and Advanced Placement testing, so home school settings are currently not regulated.
 - Neither teacher certification nor third-party curriculum approval is required.
 - Home school settings are exempt from compulsory attendance laws.

These freedoms from government regulation are the reasons parents have chosen home school settings and waived their right to a free public education.

- HB 547 inherently secures a home school family's freedom from regulation with unlimited access to government funded services. The bill specifically prohibits "an agency of the state, a public-school district, or any other governmental body to exercise control, regulatory authority or supervision over the home-schooled student, or a parent." If the public school has no regulatory authority, the school leaders are essentially handcuffed as the bill prohibits them from ensuring that a home-schooled student is in fact meeting the same eligibility requirements of their public-school teammates. Without this authority, a school athletic program is left vulnerable and open to accusations of UIL violations or suspension from league participation.
- The bill creates a fundamental inequity regarding initial and continuing participation. Though H.B. 547 does propose a way to verify a student's academic baseline, it takes the authority and the responsibility to monitor academic progress out of the hands of certified Texas teachers. A teacher/coach's definition of academic achievement can be calculated and measured based on TEKS guidelines and the approved content provided by district curriculum specialists. Often, a home-school instructor is not a certified teacher, and impartial judgment of academic success is subjective.
- Further, the inequitable circumstances are extended as HB 547 does NOT offer solutions to:
 - equally balanced required minutes of instruction and state mandated assessments,
 - enforce restrictions to practice and athletic training time,
 - outline residential boundary restrictions for eligibility, or
 - augment budgets to offset costs associated with additional student participation in extracurricular activities.

The inconsistent standards established in the bill create problems in communities, regardless of the size. Students in many high schools will not have the same time for practice and training that home-schooled children have.

- HB 547 attempts to deter students that cannot meet required public school standards from withdrawing to begin unregulated home-school by stipulating that their access to extracurricular participation be revoked for the remainder of that school year. This acknowledges that UIL participation is **not a right**, it is a **privilege** that should be withheld if established standards are not met.
- Enforcement of a code of conduct will be inconsistent, a serious problem for academic and athletic activities in which consistency for ALL students is hallmark. Teachers and coaches use participation in extracurricular academic and athletic programs as an incentive to positively influence student behavior in the classroom, sustain academic achievement, and raise self-awareness involving social exchanges on and off the campus. The bill as drafted stipulates that home school students are bound only by athletic program behavioral guidelines, thus making them exempt from accountability standards that must be met by the public-school students. This inequity makes it impossible for the educator/coach to manage academic and behavioral performance and hold the entire team accountable to consistent high standards of morality and ethics.

It is critical to act immediately. The quicker that you respond, the better!

Need to find out who represents you? [CLICK HERE!](#)

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