



## **Texas Must Prioritize Evidence-Based Practices to Create Safe and Supportive Schools**

**IDRA Testimony On Senate Bill 11, submitted by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., to the Senate Education Committee, May 11, 2023**

Dear Chair Creighton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., and I serve as the chief legal analyst at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every student through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

I respectfully submit this testimony on HB 3 to express our appreciation for Sen. Nichols and his staff for their work listening to all stakeholders and working to address concerns with the bill as filed and engrossed in the House. While we have opposed this bill as it has made its way through the process, I am testifying on the bill today after reviewing the committee substitute and recognizing that some of the most harmful provisions of the bill as filed have been removed. We are specifically appreciative of the removal of the armed security officer requirement, which would have been a costly proposal and ultimately have a negative impact on students and school climate.

I also want to emphasize that the state must do more to support students and educators, address the root causes of challenging behaviors, promote safety and strengthen school communities.

We must enact effective measures at every level to protect students from horrific acts of physical violence, like school shootings. As we do so, we must also ensure our students feel safe every day, in every way, by adopting practices that have been shown to promote safe and welcoming schools and do not compromise the overall well-being of our children (Craven, 2022). While HB 3 prioritizes facilities standards and school accountability for meeting those standards, decades of research demonstrate that prevention is key to addressing targeted school violence and other harmful behaviors that negatively impact school communities.

IDRA is concerned that some of the language in HB 3, including the emphasis on facilities standards and the the vendor registry, signals that schools should prioritize school hardening and procurement of security products and detract from evidence-based methods of ensuring school safety. These include critical and much-needed investments in mental and behavioral health, addressing the teacher shortage, and supporting students and families recovering from the trauma and instruction loss of the pandemic. We simply have not done enough this session to address these issues.

IDRA supports the provisions in HB 3 that increase the capacity of regional education service centers, the Texas School Safety Center, and TEA to provide guidance and assistance to schools in implementing best practices for school safety and security. We believe it is critical that these agencies retain the assistance of diverse and well-qualified experts who focus on evidence-based strategies in all dimensions of safe and supportive schools.

## Recommendations

IDRA urges the legislature to invest in evidence-based practices and resources that support students and educators, address the root causes of challenging youth behaviors, promote safety and strengthen school communities. These include:

- Allocate funding and provide technical support to aid school districts in implementing evidence-based strategies to strengthen relationships, support students and educators, and improve school climate, such as positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS);
- Increase school-based mental health resources, including counseling, behavioral intervention and social work professionals;
- Invest in behavior management techniques and alternatives to exclusionary discipline that address root causes of challenging and problematic behavior; and
- Train and provide technical assistance to support full implementation of student support teams established in SB 11 (2019) to intervene and prevent violence before it occurs.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. For more information, please contact Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., at [paige.duggins-clay@idra.org](mailto:paige.duggins-clay@idra.org).

## Resources

Craven, M. (June 16, 2022). What Safe Schools Should Look Like for Every Student – A Guide to Building Safe and Welcoming Schools and Rejecting Policies that Hurt Students – IDRA Issue Brief. IDRA.

<https://idra.news/SafeSchoolsIB>

David-Ferdon, C., Vivolo-Kantor, A., Dahlberg, L.L., Marshall, K.J., Rainford, N., & Hall, J. (2016). A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.*