

- SUBJECT:** Expanding the sex offender registry to include child grooming
- COMMITTEE:** Criminal Jurisprudence — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 11 ayes – Smithee, Wu, Bowers, Cook, J. Jones, Little, Louderback, Money, Moody, Rodríguez Ramos, Virdell
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For - Andy Kahan, Crime Stoppers Houston; Tabitha Munsch; Philip Munsch (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jennifer Tharp, Comal County Criminal District Attorney; Chris Jones, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; James Kershaw, Harris County Deputies' Organization FOP #39; Nathan Carroll, Houston Police Department; Andrew Wright, Houston Police Officers' Union; Jason Salter, Montgomery County District Attorneys Office; Sydney Baker, Not on Our Watch Texas; Stephanie Battaglia, Texas CASA; Ray Hunt, John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; Danny Keele, Texas Police Chiefs Association; Brianna Waldock, TexProtects; and 9 individuals)
- Against - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Allen Place, Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association)
- On - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Shannon Edmonds, Texas District and County Attorneys Association)
- BACKGROUND:** Code of Criminal Procedure art. 62.001(5) specifies criminal offenses for which a conviction or adjudication requires registration under the Texas Sex Offender Registration Program. These include crimes of indecency with a child, sexual assault, and aggravated kidnapping with intent to abuse the victim sexually, among others.
- Penal Code sec. 15.032 establishes that a person commits an offense of child grooming if the person knowingly uses certain means, including digital communication, to establish a relationship with a child or minor

with the intent to commit certain sexual offenses.

DIGEST: CSHB 2000 would amend Code of Criminal Procedure art. 62.001(5) to add the offense of child grooming under Penal Code sec. 15.032 to the list of reportable convictions or adjudications requiring registration as a sex offender.

The bill would take effect on September 1, 2025, and apply only to offenses committed on or after that date.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 2000, or “Audrii’s Law,” would require individuals convicted of child grooming to register as sex offenders, helping to close a gap in the state’s registry law and improve public safety. The bill would provide a direct response to the case of 11-year-old Audrii Cunningham, who was kidnapped and murdered by an individual with a history of sexually related offenses that were not subject to registration.

By requiring registration, the bill would ensure that the public and law enforcement had access to information about individuals who engage in child grooming. Child grooming often precedes more serious forms of abuse and is intended to lower a child’s inhibitions for purposes of sexual exploitation. The offense of child grooming, created by the 88th Legislature, is not currently included on the list of reportable convictions. This bill would address this oversight and help prevent future tragedies.

The registry is a critical tool for families and communities, and including child grooming offenses would better equip parents and guardians to protect children from potential predators. While some have raised concerns about adding non-contact offenses, the registry already includes certain non-contact crimes, such as repeat offenses of indecent exposure. Child grooming is considered a serious offense that warrants inclusion on its own.

CRITICS SAY: Adding child grooming to the sex offender registry could weaken the impact of the registry by including non-contact offenses alongside the most serious contact-based crimes. The registry was originally intended to

highlight the most severe offenses, particularly those involving physical contact, so that members of the public and law enforcement could easily identify high-risk individuals. While child grooming is serious, it differs from direct-contact offenses, and expanding the registry too broadly could undermine its usefulness as a public safety tool.