

SUBJECT: Prohibiting spectators who harm officials from attending sports events

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Buckley, Allen, Allison, Cunningham, Cody Harris, Harrison, Hinojosa, K. King, Longoria, Talarico

0 nays

3 absent — Dutton, Hefner, Schaefer

WITNESSES: For — Chris Champion, Michael Fitch, Texas Association of Sports Officials (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tricia Cave, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Eric Carcerano, Chambers County District Attorney; James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Buddy Mills, Sheriffs' Association of Texas; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Whitney Broughton, Texas Association of School Boards; Kate Kuhlmann, Texas High School Coaches Association; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Idona Griffith; Eve Margolis; Susan Stewart)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: CJ Grisham)

On — Jamey Harrison, UIL (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin, Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency; Carrie Griffith, Texas State Teachers Association; Henry Bohnert)

DIGEST: CSHB 2484 would prohibit a spectator of a University Interscholastic League (UIL) competition from attending any future extracurricular activity sponsored by the school district or UIL if the spectator engaged in violent conduct that caused bodily injury to a person serving as a sports official in retaliation for or as a result of the person's actions while performing their duties.

The bill would require a school district or charter school that held an extracurricular athletic activity or UIL competition on district or school property to provide a peace officer, school resource officer, administrator, or security personnel to ensure the safety of a sports official of the event until the official departed the property if:

- a participant or spectator of the event engaged in, attempted to engage in, or threatened violent conduct against the official or otherwise disrupted the official's duties or free movement; or
- the district or school reasonably suspected that such an incident could occur at the event.

The bill would include conforming language that would apply attendance eligibility criteria for extracurricular activities to non-student spectators.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

The 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.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2484 would help to protect sports officials at public school sporting events. The bill would address a loophole in current law, which prevents non-student spectators who behaved violently at one event from being barred from attending future events. Threatening behavior is not accepted at other kinds of school events, and school sporting events should be no different. The bill would help keep sports officials secure and willing to work when a shortage already exists. The bill would not unfairly punish a spectator with a sports event ban unless the spectator's conscious actions resulted in the bodily harm of an official.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

While protecting sports officials is important, CSHB 2484 could punish some spectators unduly for normal sports fan activities. The bill is too broad and could lead to some verbal conduct that otherwise would not have been classified as violent to result in an undeserved sports event ban.