

SUBJECT: Transportation between schools and child-care facilities

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Madden
0 nays
3 absent — Oliveira, Dutton, Hochberg

WITNESSES: For — Bill Pewitt, Texas Licensed Child Care Association, Jo-Hannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, ch. 34 governs the transportation system for Texas public schools. In establishing and operating the transportation system, the county or school district board may allow a parent to request that a child riding on a school bus be picked up and dropped off at a child-care center rather than at the child's residence.

DIGEST: CSHB 3458 would require the county or school district board to allow a parent to designate a child-care facility instead of the child's residence as the regular location for the purposes of obtaining transportation to and from a child's school, if the child-care facility was on the district's or county's approved transportation route for the child's school.

The bill would prohibit the commissioner of education from reducing the allotment to which a district or county was entitled because the district or county provided transportation for an eligible student to and from a child-care center instead of the child's residence.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 3458 is a common sense solution to a problem that some child-care centers are experiencing. Current law already allows a parent to request that their child be dropped off at a day-care center for after school care, rather than

home, but the discretion is left to the school district whether or not to permit a child to be dropped off somewhere other than the designated bus stop.

Many day-care centers find themselves in the position of having school bus drive right past the facility and drop children off a few blocks down the street or around the corner, forcing staff to get the children and transport them back to the day-care center. This increases the cost of transportation for day-care centers, thus increasing the cost of child care for parents. If a school bus drives right past a day care facility, it makes sense for the bus to make a stop directly at the facility. This would be safer for children and would not increase transportation service costs for the school district.

The bill would not require school districts to change bus routes for the convenience of children in day care, nor would it mandate that school buses provide a taxi service for children. It only would apply to buses carrying children to day-care centers located on school district-approved transportation routes.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

This issue should be left up to local school district boards, and the law should remain permissive.

This bill could lead to an increase in transportation costs for school districts. Bus stop locations on transportation routes are selected carefully to ensure that the bus can stop without difficulty and that children safely can enter and exit the bus. Forcing a bus driver to make additional stops to accommodate certain day-care facilities could waste time and increase route mileage for local districts, particularly if it required the bus to turn around or turn off a main road to allow children to exit the bus safely in front of a day-care center.

NOTES:

The committee substitute differs from the bill as introduced by stipulating that a child-care facility to receive school children would have to be located on an existing bus route.