

- SUBJECT:** Requiring parental notice about lice in a public elementary school
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Heather Sheffield)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Anderson, Arlington ISD Board of Trustees; Seth Rau, San Antonio ISD; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Francis Luna)
- On — Mark Wiggins, Association of Texas Professional Educators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kara Belew and Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)
- DIGEST:** HB 1720 would require a school administrator or nurse of a public elementary school who determined or otherwise became aware that a child enrolled in the school had lice to provide written or electronic notice to:
- the parent of the child with lice as soon as practicable but not later than 48 hours after becoming aware of the fact; and
 - the parent of each child assigned to the same classroom not later than the fifth school day after becoming aware of the fact.
- The notice could not identify the child with lice. It would be required to include the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the treatment and prevention of lice.
- The Commissioner of Education would be required to adopt rules as necessary to implement the notification in a way that complied with federal and state laws on confidentiality of student medical and

educational records.

This 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, 2017, and would apply beginning with the 2017-18 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1720 would help protect families from lice infestations by requiring elementary schools to notify the parents of any child infected with lice and the parents of the child's classmates. The notice would include important health information about treating and preventing lice, which would equip parents with tools to prevent future outbreaks while not identifying the child who was infected.

Most schools already notify parents of lice incidents, and it would not be time-consuming to require them to send an email or other notice. Some districts prohibit schools from notifying parents, which can allow lice to spread more easily around the classroom and school. Parents deserve to know if their child was infected or might have been exposed so they could begin treatment or take other precautions to prevent the lice from spreading to other children in their home or school.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1720's requirements that parents of every student in a classroom be notified if a student has lice would be time-consuming, cost prohibitive, and ineffective. It would take up time that school nurses could be spending to address more serious health needs. Parental notices could create anxiety about lice and lead to harmful over-treatment. The best way to prevent lice is to avoid head-to-head or hair-to-hair contact, which many districts already enforce. Districts should retain control to address the issue of head lice locally in the manner most suitable to them.