

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 195
By: Garcia
Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

There have been many cases of Texas children facing harmful situations on their walk to and from school. In 2016 alone some of the victims of these situations included Josue Flores, an 11-year-old boy killed on the way home after school, Lauren Landavazo and Makayla Smith, both 13-year-olds shot at on the way home from school, and Omar Cabrera, an eighth grader beaten and robbed on the way home from school. Initiatives such as Safe Walk Home, a Houston neighborhood program, have been adopted in order to protect the children who are not able to be transported by typical school bus services.

Safe Walk Home was created with the idea of neighborhoods having designated "safe passages" that will keep student walkers away from the most dangerous parts of their commutes. A safe passage-style program requires trained volunteers to either walk students to their home/school or to stand guard along safe routes. Large cities, such as Los Angeles and Chicago, have implemented similar programs in districts that need additional transportation services. These programs take time and resources in order to be effective. Studies on these established programs have shown that the likelihood of student walkers being exposed to harmful situations decreases over time.

S.B. 195 allows for schools in areas indicated to have high incidences of violent crimes, according to law enforcement records, to apply for an additional 10 percent of transportation allotment. Because school district transportation departments already have high demands to meet, these additional funds could be used to fund alternative transportation projects such as safe passages. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 195 amends current law relating to funding under the transportation allotment for public school students subject to a high risk of violence while walking to school.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 42.155, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 42.155, Education Code, by amending Subsection (d) and adding Subsections (d-1) and (d-2), as follows:

(d) Authorizes a district or county to apply for and, on approval of the commissioner of education (commissioner), receive an additional amount to be used for the transportation of children living within two miles of the school they attend who would be subject to hazardous traffic conditions or a high risk of violence if they walked to school.

(d-1) Requires each board of trustees, for purposes of Subsection (d), to provide to the commissioner an explanation, rather than the definition, of the hazardous traffic conditions or areas presenting a high risk of violence applicable to that district and to identify the specific hazardous or high-risk areas for which the allocation is requested. Provides that a hazardous traffic condition exists under certain conditions. Provides that an area presents a high risk of violence if law enforcement records indicate a high

incidence of violent crimes in the area. Requires each board of trustees requesting funds for an area presenting a high risk of violence to, in addition to the explanation required by this subsection, provide the commissioner with consolidated law enforcement records that document violent crimes identified by reporting agencies within the relevant jurisdiction.

(d-2) Authorizes a district or county to use all or part of any funds received under Subsection (d) to support community walking transportation programs, including walking school bus programs, provided that the district or county requires each supported program to submit a financial report to the district or county each semester that covers services provided by the program for the benefit of the district or county. Requires the commissioner to adopt rules governing the transportation allotment as necessary to permit a district or county to receive funds under Subsection (d) that may be used to support innovative school safety projects, including community walking transportation programs as provided by this subsection and any other appropriate safety project, including rules defining an approved walking route mile that is authorized to be used as necessary in implementing this subsection.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2017.