

March 31, 2011

Dear Senator Shapiro:

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) support and realize the great potential of the state's Virtual Schools Network (VSN). With regard to SB 1483 (as introduced), however, our position is "On with Concerns," as we have many questions about Section 5 of the bill, which creates Virtual High Schools.

- Primarily, what are the safeguards against these high schools becoming diploma mills?
- Although the bill allows the commissioner to define an "eligible entity," it is unclear whether an individual would be an "eligible entity" or would it need to be a group of people.
- What is the protection against a criminal operating a virtual high school and getting FSP funding for doing so? Some statutory parameters seem in order.
- Would virtual high schools be rated under the state and/or federal accountability system? If so, on which indicators?
- There do not seem to be any safeguards to prevent participating students from cheating in these virtual high schools – or to require the commissioner to develop such safeguards.
- What are the safeguards to protect against "virtual students?"

And lastly, why could a traditional high school not remain the conduit between students and the VSN? The traditional high school has the infrastructure in place to provide the necessary safeguards for students participating in the VSN. We think a better solution would be to amend the VSN statute to better address the needs of the particular population targeted by the proposed virtual high schools, rather than create virtual high schools.

For the above reasons, we cannot support SB 1483, as introduced.



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