



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD

SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Schwertner Files Bill to Provide
Mental Health First Aid Training for Texas Teachers**

Voluntary training program would help teachers identify potential warning signs for common mental illnesses and facilitate help for students who need professional care

AUSTIN, TX – Today, in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Day, State Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown) filed SB 955; a bill intended to provide voluntary Mental Health First Aid training for Texas teachers.

“In light of recent school violence, including the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, it’s critical that we do all we can to spread awareness about mental health and look for additional ways to help our teachers maintain a safe school environment,” said Schwertner.

“In addition to enhancing school safety, this bill will help Texas teachers recognize the warning signs for a variety of serious mental illnesses and teach them how to work with parents to coordinate the help and care these children need in order to live better, more fulfilling lives.”

Administered through the state's network of Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs), the Mental Health First Aid training program will provide Texas educators with the strategies and resources to respond to a variety of serious mental illnesses such as depression, trauma, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and severe anxiety.

Participants of the training will learn how to assess risk, listen to and support the child in crisis, and identify professional resources and supports. The training is voluntary and would satisfy 12 hours of continuing professional education required by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

"This is an issue very near and dear to my heart," said Schwertner. "My mother spent over 20 years as a nurse in our state's mental health system, and I know the impact that this kind of early intervention program can have on the long term well-being of someone suffering from mental illness."

In 2012, Dr. Charles Schwertner was first elected to serve the citizens of Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas which includes Brazos, Freestone, Grimes, Leon, Limestone, Madison, Milam, Robertson, Walker and Williamson counties. In addition to his role in the Texas Legislature, Dr. Schwertner serves as the managing partner of Georgetown Orthopedics; a medical clinic that provides care to over 20,000 patients each year. He and his wife Belinda, an obstetrician/gynecologist, live in Georgetown with their three sons: Carson, Zachary, and Matthew.

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