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SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Schwertner Works to Reform Child Care Licensing,
Enhance Care Options for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse**

Senate Bill 1208 creates two new types of child care licenses; pushes reforms to reduce red tape, increase foster capacity, and provide individualized care for special victims.

AUSTIN, TX -- Today, Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown) filed SB 1208, new legislation to improve outdated licensing standards for foster homes and other related child care settings and provide new, specialized care options for child abuse victims.

"All too often, our state child care facilities have failed to meet the unique needs of children victimized by sexual abuse or other severe traumas," said Schwertner. "By creating a more focused structure for child care licensing, SB 1208 will provide the opportunity to serve the children of Texas more effectively, and in the most appropriate care setting for their individual needs."

In addition to proposing reforms to the existing licenses for child-placement agencies, independent foster homes, and general residential operations, SB 1208 also creates two new license types for specialized child care facilities that focus on serving children with special needs: Specialized Child-Care Operations and Foster Family Operations.

The bill expands foster capacity by eliminating a host of bureaucratic headaches surrounding the current child care licensure process. SB 1208 authorizes providers to obtain more than one child care license at a single facility, helping them to treat different children with different needs. It also removes the "single location" requirement, allowing providers to obtain a single license for the operation of multiple child care facilities.

"The Governor's office is working with public and private partners to meet the unique needs of child sex trafficking victims, added Andrea Sparks, Director of Governor Abbot's Sex Trafficking Team. "The new licensing options proposed by Senator Schwertner would provide the flexibility that we need to develop and sustain the specialized placements these survivors need to heal and thrive."

Deficiencies in the current licensure process were first identified by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in conversations with providers about what regulatory burdens were preventing an increase in child care capacity. The change is expected to increase the number of family care settings available to children and corresponds with a court order issued earlier this year by District Court Judge Janis Jack demanding that the state work to eliminate its use of foster group homes.

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his third term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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