



SENATOR PAUL BETTENCOURT

DISTRICT 7

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Sen. Bettencourt Says Scourge of Inappropriate Student-Educator Relationships must be stamped out

*Files Senate Bill 7 following a flare-up of teacher misconduct in the state
Educator misconduct is one of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick's top 10 legislative priorities*

Austin – Following a dramatic increase in the reported number of cases of teacher misconduct in Texas, Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) today filed Senate Bill 7 to strengthen and enhance educator misconduct laws in Texas. Data shows that the Texas Education Agency opened 222 cases into inappropriate student-educator relationships in Fiscal Year 15-16. In the current fiscal year, TEA has already opened 49 cases. This growing problem includes instances in local districts, such as Houston ISD, Cy-Fair ISD, Klein ISD, Katy ISD, and Spring Branch ISD, but the problem is statewide, per testimony at the Senate Education Committee.

"Any inappropriate relationships between teachers and students must be stamped out, period," said Senator Bettencourt. **"I was shocked to hear in testimony before the Senate Education Committee that in some cases school districts simply quashed subpoenas and 'passed the trash' rather than protecting the students in their charge. That is unacceptable."**

Senate Bill 7 seeks to enact the following changes and apply them to both public and private schools:

- Automatic revocation of teaching certificate if offender receives deferred adjudication for an educator misconduct offense or any offense that would require them to register as a sex offender.
- Expands reporting requirements to include not only superintendents, but principals as well. Failure to report will be a criminal offense, and intentionally failing to report is a state jail felony.
- Expands these rules to apply to improper relationships between students and educators, regardless of school district.
- Builds on Texas Education Agency subpoena authority by allowing them to compel the attendance of relevant witnesses. TEA gained initial subpoena authority last session to subpoena relevant documents under SB 1222 (by Bettencourt) which was later added as an amendment to HB 2205.
- Requires school districts to adopt written policies concerning electronic communication between a school employee and a student.
- Enacts new continuing education requirements.
- Stops "passing the trash" by holding administrators accountable by revoking their certificate if they help a person who has previously engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor and assists them in finding new employment as an educator.

"With the prevalence of social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and others, it is easier than ever to communicate," continued Senator Bettencourt. **"It is time for everyone involved to stop looking the other way and stamp this problem out."**

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick has announced that educator misconduct is one of his top 10 legislative priorities for the upcoming 85th Legislative Session.

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