



SENATOR PAUL BETTENCOURT

DISTRICT 7

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Senator Bettencourt calls recent flare-up of educator misconduct in Texas a “Statewide Plague” *Lt. Governor Patrick’s priority SB 7 discussed in committee today*

Austin – During today’s Senate Education Committee hearing chaired by Senator Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood), Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) stood up for Texas students and laid out Senate Bill 7 which will strengthen and enhance educator misconduct laws in Texas. Noting the 43 percent increase in the number of teacher misconduct cases the Texas Education Agency has opened in the current fiscal year, Senator Bettencourt said, **“This is not an urban v. rural problem. Teacher misconduct reports have been filed in Austin, Bastrop, Cleburne, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Jefferson, Katy, San Antonio, Waxahachie; the list is almost endless. This is an ‘everybody has a problem’ issue. Improper relationships between students and educators is a statewide plague.”**

“This is not a victimless crime,” he continued. **“Students are affected immediately, and their stories are heartbreaking. Inappropriate relationships between teachers and students must be stamped out, period,”** Senator Bettencourt added.

SB 7 has tremendous support from educator groups, school board groups and the education community. Key bill points include:

- Expanding the Texas Education Agency’s investigative authority from intra-district to inter-district relationships;
- Expanding reporting requirements to include not only superintendents, but principals as well, with penalties for failing to report; and
- 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.

“Failure to report is a big part of this bill,” Senator Bettencourt pointed out in the hearing.

Senator Van Taylor, one of the 25 co-authors on SB 7 and author of SB 653 on this issue, had it exactly right today when he said, **“If you’ve got a superintendent that has a teacher molesting children and he can’t figure it out to report it to SBEC [State Board of Educator Certification], then you’ve got to get a new superintendent.”**

“We must stand up for our children and stamp this problem out!” Senator Bettencourt concluded.

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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