



House Public Education Committee
House Bill 3089 by Rep. Lacey Hull
Submitted on behalf of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas
April 14, 2021

Chair Dutton, Vice Chair Lozano, and committee members:

On behalf of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, a coalition of more than 50 organizations working together to develop and promote state policies that prevent and reduce obesity in Texas, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 3089.

School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) play a vital role in helping schools develop programs and curricula that provide students with the knowledge, skills, and support to lead healthy lives. Full community involvement is essential for the SHACs' success. These committees address a broad range of physical and mental health challenges facing children including obesity and cardiovascular health. SHACs are called on to advise on health education, physical education, nutrition services, and school health and safety initiatives, among other topics.¹ **Their recommendations should reflect the Whole School, Whole Community, and Whole Child approach to health and learning, a model that necessitates the inclusion of families and communities.**² Since SHACs are tailored to the district, they reflect the issues and the approaches dictated by the community they serve. As organizations concerned with the obesity epidemic, we especially appreciate the work of SHACs related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition, and creating healthy school environments.

Because the primary purpose of SHACs is to provide community input on health programming, it is important that their members come from diverse backgrounds. While the majority of members must be parents of children enrolled in the district, the composition of SHACs varies among districts, often including physicians, community leaders, teachers, and others who can bring expertise and understanding of community values to the role. No two SHACs are identical, and that is one of their greatest strengths. **A multisectoral membership enriches discussions and ensures all members of the community are included in advising programming.**³ If a diverse group of community members do not participate, SHACs cannot be fully effective.

The Partnership for a Healthy Texas is concerned that subjecting SHACs to the same meeting standards as governmental bodies would make SHAC members, who are parents and community volunteers serving in an advisory role, subject to open records requests that would discourage their participation. We seek to ensure parents have access to SHAC discussions and encourage them to contribute to continue the community engagement that make SHACs valuable and effective in addressing community health concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 3089. For any questions or follow-up, please contact Joel Romo, chair of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas Legislative Committee, at Joel.Romo@texanapublicaffairs.com.

Partnership for a Healthy Texas Steering Committee Organization Members



¹ Texas Department of State Health Services. School Health Advisory Council. A guide for Texas school districts. January 2021. www.dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/SHAC/SHACGuide.pdf.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2020. The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model. Retrieved May 4, 2020, from CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health: cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm.

³ Texas Department of State Health Services. School Health Advisory Council. A guide for Texas school districts. January 2021. www.dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/SHAC/SHACGuide.pdf.