



Physicians Caring for Texans

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**House Public Education**  
**Senate Bill 347 by Sen. Angela Paxton**  
**Texas Medical Association**  
*May 4, 2021*

Chairman Dutton and committee members, on behalf of the Texas Medical Association, an organization of more than 55,000 physician and medical student members, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate Bill 347 expressing our concerns.

We understand you have a special interest in matters related to the important role of school health advisory councils (SHACs) and appreciate the intent of SB 347 to increase transparency. However, we remain concerned about the possible unintended consequences of defining these groups of community volunteers as a “governmental body” under Section 551.001(3), Government Code, making them subject to open records statutes.

SHACs are vital to schools as they are called on to inform curricula development and advise on a variety of topics including mental health, physical health, nutrition, and school health and safety initiatives, among others. Yet SHACs hold no control over school district decisions and remain merely advisory. SHACs are tailored to the district, and as a result, reflect the issues and the approaches dictated by the community they serve. 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. Because of the participation of diverse members no two SHACs are identical, and that is one of their greatest strengths. Inclusion of a multisectoral membership enriches discussions and ensures all members of the community are included in advising health programming. This is where the SHAC is most effective.

For the current and future SHAC members suggested in statute (e.g., physicians and members of other health care professions, members of the clergy, and law enforcement professionals), participation on a SHAC under the provisions of SB 347 could open their personal communication devices, messages, email, and other correspondence to public view. We are concerned that might become a barrier to recruiting knowledgeable volunteers to ensure the full community participation needed to complete the important work of the SHAC. We ask that you consider alternate transparency strategies, such as those found in the current version of Senate Bill 442 by Sen. Bryan Hughes sent to the House Public Health Committee. That bill provides school and community members with information related to the transparency of the operations of their SHAC by requiring SHAC meetings be posted on the district’s website.

TMA thanks you for your diligent efforts on behalf of schoolchildren across Texas and for the opportunity to comment on SB 347. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Troy Alexander, director, TMA Legislative Affairs, at [troy.alexander@texmed.org](mailto:troy.alexander@texmed.org) or (512) 871-9997.