Reduce the Costly and Unnecessary Over-Criminalization of Misbehavior in School

Implement Counseling and Progressive Sanctions in Lieu of Class C Misdemeanors

**CLASS C TICKETING IN TEXAS’ PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

While well intentioned, school discipline practices in Texas – like “zero-tolerance policies” – have resulted in a multitude of negative consequences: the over-criminalization of adolescent behavior, disproportionate discipline among youth of color and youth with disabilities,\(^1\) greater numbers of expulsions,\(^2\) and a path to future juvenile justice system involvement.\(^3\) Furthermore, schools’ uses of School Resource Officers (on-campus law enforcement officers) have led to a dramatic uptick in Class C misdemeanor citations among youth.\(^4\)

Texas should more effectively address adolescent misbehavior within public schools through the use of counseling and alternative sanctions that do not result in costly, long-term collateral consequences (e.g., a criminal record and a hefty fine).

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Texas Appleseed reports that the use of **Class C misdemeanor tickets within the school setting are frequently issued for minor level offenses** (e.g., indecent language or an offensive gesture), which are behaviors that historically have been addressed by school administrators.\(^5\)

- Ticketing practices within Texas’ schools are highly disproportionate, with both African-American and Hispanic students being overrepresented among those disciplined.\(^6\)

- Texas’ school disciplinary practices increase the likelihood of future juvenile justice involvement,\(^7\) at great expense to taxpayers and to students saddled with the long-term collateral consequences of system involvement.

- Implementing “common-sense” discipline practices (e.g., behavioral therapy and progressive sanctions) rather than relying heavily on ticketing has resulted in success for multiple school districts across the nation.\(^8\)

**COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT S.B. 393 BY SENATOR WEST**

- **S.B. 393 will allow certain courts, schools, or probation departments to provide at-risk youth with case managers and prevention and intervention services, to help them target the root causes of their misbehavior and improve their likelihood of graduating.** As opposed to receiving a Class C misdemeanor citation for certain conduct, students will have the opportunity to address their misbehavior through counseling and avoid justice system involvement.

- **S.B. 393 will allow school districts to alternatively sanction youth who engage in disorderly conduct, disruption of class, or disruption of transportation.** Rather than receiving citations for misbehavior, youth will be subject to progressive sanctions including a warning, a behavioral contract, school-based community service, or counseling or other services aimed at addressing behavioral problems.
Citations


2 Ibid.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.


8 Advancement Project, Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track (2012),