

**Item of information regarding the Texas School Chaplain Act (SB763)
December 18, 2023**

1. Background:

On June 18, 2023, the 88th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 763, allowing school districts and open-enrollment charter schools the option to "...employ, or accept as a volunteer, a chaplain to provide support, services, and programs for students as assigned by the board of trustees of the district or the governing body of the school. A chaplain employed or volunteering under this chapter is not required to be certified by the State Board for Educator Certification" (Texas S.B. 763, 2023).

Chaplains employed by or serving as volunteers in a school districts could provide support, services, and programs for students in the areas of restorative discipline and restorative justice practices, mental and behavioral health, and programs related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Each board of trustees must take a record vote on whether to adopt a policy authorizing a campus of the district to employ or accept as a volunteer a chaplain under Chapter 23 of the Texas Education Code.

2. Process:

Although chaplains are valued, respected members of their communities and play a vital role in the spiritual lives of those they serve, they are not trained mental health professionals and are not proficient in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program that is required in all Texas public schools. Utilizing unlicensed and/or uncertified chaplains to serve as mental health personnel could pose a threat to the psychological safety of students, adversely impact academic outcomes, and create liability issues for the district.

3. Fiscal Impact:

No impact

4. Recommendation:

Information only

5. Action Required:

Approval action will be required at a second meeting

6. Contact Person:

Niki Henderson