

State of Texas
Texas Senate

P.O. Box 12068
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2068
(512) 463-0107
FAX (512) 463-8810



11451 KATY FREEWAY, SUITE 209
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77079
(713) 464-0282
FAX (713) 461-0108

Paul Bettencourt
DISTRICT 7

Paul.Bettencourt@senate.texas.gov

For Immediate Release
May 1, 2019

Contact Information
Robert Flanagan | (713) 464-0282
Robert.Flanagan@senate.texas.gov

Senator Bettencourt Unanimously Passes Bipartisan Bill to Get ISDs Out Of The Waterpark Business
SB1133 will prevent ISDs from using taxpayer dollars to run waterparks, hotels, or a golf course

Austin, Texas - Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) passed Senate Bill 1133 through the full senate with a vote of 31-0 to prevent school districts and open-enrollment charter schools from being able to own and operate any waterparks, golf courses or hotels with taxpayer dollars. Co- Authors on this legislation also include Senator Donna Campbell (R-New Braunfels), Senator Pat Fallon (R-Prosper), Senator Bob Hall (R-Rockwall), Senator Juan Hinojosa (D-McAllen), Senator Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), and Senator Eddie Lucio Jr (D-Brownsville).

"The fundamental mission of school districts is to educate the students of Texas, not get into the water park, hotel, or golf business," said Senator Hinojosa. **"In this case, we are forced to legislate common sense,"** added Senator Bettencourt.

This issue rose to prominence when La Joya ISD used money out of their general revenues to build and operate a water park, golf course, and other items not related to their mission of education. By using their general fund revenues these expenditures were never put before the voters for approval. Governor Abbott (R-Texas) previously highlighted the issue on his Twitter feed calling for reform.

SB 1133 would prevent a school district or open-enrollment charter school directly or indirectly through an affiliate, including an affiliated nonprofit corporation, from having a business interest in an entity or owning real property associated with a water park, golf course, or hotel. The bill makes La Hoya ISD get out of the water park and golf course business by making them divest all ownership of, or business interest in, their water park and golf course not later than September 1, 2024

"Texas taxpayers are already bearing the brunt of skyrocketing property taxes," continued Senator Bettencourt. **"When they hear that their hard earned money is being used not to educate students as intended but rather to build and operate a water park, golf course or hotel, at a loss, they are rightfully outraged!"**

Situations such as this highlight the need for reform in the recapture, or "Robin Hood" element of the school finance system which the Texas Senate is looking to address this session.

"There is no excuse for school districts to be spending school resources on items like the water park in the La Joya water park. Rather than using precious resources for the education of students, they fritter away the money on losing propositions and come back to the state with their hand out for more revenue," said Senator Hall. **The superintendent should have been fired and the school board should have been replaced."** he added.

###