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STATE SENATOR • DISTRICT 16

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State Senator Nathan Johnson files Homeless Youth ID and Music Therapy Bills

AUSTIN – Following on the Medicaid expansion bill he filed Wednesday, Texas State Senator Nathan Johnson filed SB 538 and SB 539. The two bills address discrete issues, but are part of the broader scope of necessary reform that Johnson seeks to introduce.

"We must make sure that Texas is creating opportunities and environments that foster self-sufficiency and a productive and healthy workforce," Johnson said. "These bills, among others, provide mechanisms to help Texans continue to stay active in and enjoy the benefits of their communities, while contributing more to our economy and infrastructure."

SB 538 would enable homeless young people between the ages of 16 and 24 to obtain basic identification documents with the help of a licensed state social worker. Currently, hundreds of thousands of homeless young Texans cannot apply for a driver's license, job, or school scholarships because they lack a home address.

SB 539 directs the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to create an advisory council to evaluate the academic study and state certification of music therapists. Music therapy uses music in a clinical setting, and has been demonstrated to improve mental health outcomes. Currently five Texas universities, including Southern Methodist University in Dallas, have music therapy programs.

"With negligible cost to the state, SB 538 would allow homeless young people to obtain the basic documents that would allow them to be independent and join the workforce," Johnson said. "Music therapy is a medically-recognized, evidence-based treatment that may be used to address serious health and mental health issues facing Texans."

Senator Nathan Johnson was elected in 2018 to represent the economically and demographically diverse Texas Senate District 16. Johnson is a member of the Committees on Health & Human Services, Veteran Affairs & Border Security, Water & Rural Affairs, and Administration.

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