TEXAS COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
Senate Bill (SB) 1447
Senator José Menéndez

Access to Assistive Technology for Students with Disabilities

SB 1447 would amend the Texas Education Code's requirement that TEA adopt standards for allowed electronic devices and software applications used by a school district or open-enrollment charter school. It would mandate that the agency provide exceptions to the standards for students with disabilities, consistent with each student's IEP or 504 plan. This would allow students to use reasonable accommodations, assistive technology, electronic devices, or software applications that otherwise might not be permissible under the SCOPE Act standards.

The Texas Education Code defines an assistive technology device as "any device, including equipment or a product system, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a student with a disability." This technology may include applications or devices that help with recording, taking notes, text-to-speech, voice recognition, screen reading, braille translation, and more.

In 2023, Texas lawmakers passed the Securing Children Online Through Parental Empowerment (SCOPE) Act to protect minors online by requiring parental consent for digital service agreements. However, some school districts' interpretations of the law limited access to assistive technologies, unintentionally creating barriers to learning for thousands of students with disabilities.

Supporters of the bill include: The Arc of Texas, Autism Society of Texas, Disability Rights Texas, Texas AFT, Texas Association of School Boards, Texas Classroom Teachers Association, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education, Texas Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, and Texas State Teachers Association.

"What [SB 1447] does is create a carve out for students with IEPs or 504 plans with the school so they can utilize the accommodations needed to focus on their education."

Sen. José Menéndez, author of SB 1447