



Texas Home School Coalition ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to Serving and Protecting the Home School Community of Texas

Tim Lambert, President • PO Box 6747 • Lubbock Texas 79493

(806) 744-4441 • Fax: (806) 744-4446 • E-mail: staff@thsc.org • www.thsc.org

February 24, 2011

Ms. Sheri Gipson
Deputy Assistant Director
Driver License Division
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

Director Gipson:

By way of introduction, let me state that the Texas Home School Coalition Association is a statewide organization of home educators; we have almost 70,000 home school families on our mailing list; Our mission is to serve the homeschool community and protect the right of parents to teach their children at home.

I am writing in response to your recent comments regarding the implementation of HB 339, passed by the Texas Legislature in 2009—specifically, the requirement to collect statistical data for the purpose of tracking and publishing the collision rate of students from each driver education school or course. In a September 6, 2009, article in the *Houston Chronicle*, a DPS spokesman stated that the agency was not sure how it was going to interpret HB 339's requirement that it collect and publish the collision rate of each entity that provides driver education, based on the driving record of their students.

The *Houston Chronicle* staff writer who wrote the article, Carolyn Feibel, said that she had spoken to two different DPS officials who expressed the notion that they may interpret the word "entity" as a whole group (i.e., public school, commercial school and parent-taught) and not as individual providers. She also said that the DPS spokesmen seemed uncertain as to how the DPS would decide what to do on this issue. In 2009 Ms. Terri Hamby, a staff attorney with DPS Driver License Division, articulated similar comments and added that there was consideration for collecting data on all parent-taught courses together rather than, as required under the language of HB 339, for each individual school or program.

In the fall of 2009 Chief Michael Kelley assured me that DPS would make the necessary changes to the agency's data systems to enable collection of information from all entities providing driver education in 2010 with the first publication of that data in 2011. Now we are being told that this information was *not* collected last year and thus will not be published until 2012, a full year after the mandated date set by the statute.

Ms. Gipson, the issue of teen driver safety is critical; automobile accidents claim the lives of thousands of young Texas drivers each year, and it is clear that the Texas legislature intended to take action to reduce teen driver collisions, including the collection and publication of statistical data by individual school or program. State Representative Larry Phillips and State Senator John Carona both supported the free market approach of collecting and publishing the crash rates of each and every individual school or program that offers driver education.

Texas parents deserve to be able to make the decision about which entity will provide the driver education for their children based on the safety record of the students who have graduated from these schools or programs. Indeed, there was universal support for this proposal, and the language on this requirement in HB 339 is unambiguous and was clearly understood by legislators to require each school or program to be tracked individually.

The purpose of the legislation is to provide information that allows the consumer to make an informed choice regarding the effectiveness of driver education courses and providers. It is also designed to provide information to legislators and regulators so that decisions regarding driver education safety can be based on facts as opposed to anecdotal stories and

Board of Directors:	Dr. Ray Ballmann <i>Glen Rose</i>	George Clay <i>Wichita Falls</i>	Kent Dowden <i>Wylie</i>	James Frank <i>Wichita Falls</i>	Donna Harp <i>Austin</i>	Pat Hurd <i>Weatherford</i>	
	Mary James <i>Austin</i>	Tim Lambert <i>Lubbock</i>	Doug McKissick <i>Cypress</i>	Tom McMinn <i>Hempstead</i>	Gavino Perez <i>San Antonio</i>	Sarah Singleton <i>Houston</i>	David Strassner <i>Houston</i>

Ms. Sheri Gipson
February 24, 2011
Page 2

special interest groups. If done correctly, the collection and publication of the statistical data could significantly reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by teen drivers and will become a model for every state in the nation.

I urge you in the strongest terms to implement the legislation as the language requires. I would appreciate a written response regarding the DPS plan to implement the will of the Texas legislature regarding this element of HB 339.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Lambert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Tim Lambert

cc: Governor Rick Perry; Lt. Governor David Dewhurst; Allan B. Pollunsky, Chairman, Texas Public Safety Commission; Mr. Steve McCraw, Director, DPS; State Representative Larry Phillips; State Representative Lois Kolkhorst; State Senator Tommy Williams; Patrick Barrett, Driver Ed in a Box; Texas Home Schoolers