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- The state policy that shuffles disruptive students into alternative education settings does little more than create a pipeline direct to Texas prisons, Rep. Harold Dutton, D-Houston, told a policy forum at the Texas Public Policy Foundation last week. The portion of the education code that deals with student conduct – known as Safe Schools, or Chapter 37 – has been in place for 10 years. School districts, and even teachers, were given broad latitude to remove students from class. Under the code, those students can be placed in a district alternative education setting or, in the case of larger counties and more serious infractions, a juvenile-justice education program. Teacher groups hailed the policy because it gave them control of their classrooms and a chance to teach those who wanted to learn, while students who acted out were simply placed in an alternative setting. Dutton, however, says the policy has given teachers an easy "out" to remove students they can't teach. And there's plenty more Dutton doesn't like in the code, such as schools' ability to hand out police-officer-issued citations for infractions as minor as chewing gum. Other areas of concern were the low quality of educational programs, the mixing of criminal and noncriminal students, the handling of special education students, and due process. – *K.R.*

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