



# Testimony

## SB 1955

### *Testimony in Support Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee*

by Erin Davis Valdez, Policy Analyst

During the COVID school closures of 2020-2021, many Texas families have turned to learning pods to help their children grow academically and socially through this difficult time.

A “learning pod” is simply a group of families who voluntarily gather either in a home, park, or other location to share academic resources, tutoring, or just moral support. Recent polling reveals that about 85% of parents currently participating in a learning pod are doing so [in addition to regular schooling](#) (p. 21).

Unfortunately, certain municipalities, including [Austin, have attempted to regulate learning pods](#) using provisions that apply to child care providers, residential zoning, and school health guidelines.

Homeschool families have formed and participated in co-ops, or co-operative learning groups, for decades. When COVID-19 forced many families into homeschooling or learning from home, they “discovered” the benefits of group learning spontaneously. Whether parents are supplementing their child’s education or using a pod as a replacement for regular schooling, learning pods are a form of entirely voluntary association.

As a homeschooled kid growing up in the 1980s and 1990s in Florida, and later in Texas, I benefited from classes taught by parents of other homeschooled students. We met in homes, churches, and parks. It was a wonderful way for us to learn things that were not easily available as part of our core curriculum—I recall classes in everything from cake decoration to German to woodworking to basketball.

SB 1955 simply seeks to protect the existing liberties that families have always enjoyed in Texas. Generations of students, like myself, have benefited from learning in community with other families who share our values and interests. This bill would ensure that families that participate in learning pods are not targeted by local governments for exercising their constitutional right to free association. ★

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Erin Davis Valdez** is a policy analyst with Right on Work at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. She conducts research on career and technical education at the secondary and post-secondary levels, civics education, and welfare to work programs in Texas. Valdez earned an MA in classics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a BA in classical studies from Hillsdale College.

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