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★
TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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GUILLEN HONORS SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES

HB 1645 Gives Students who Participated in Special Olympics Events Recognition for their Achievements

AUSTIN - State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) is an author of HB 1645, a bill which requires high schools to allow students who compete in the Special Olympics to earn a letter for their letterman jacket. On **Monday, May 22**, HB 1645 was reported enrolled and sent to the Governor for action.

"Our Special Olympics athletes have exemplified what it means to be a champion through hard work and sportsmanship," said Guillen. "These extraordinary young men and women deserve to have their achievements recognized."

Currently, Texas school districts award letters to high school students for academic, athletic, or extracurricular activities, forming a memorable part of the traditional high school experience. Only a handful of schools, such as the Kingsville Independent School District, allow Special Olympics athletes to letter for their efforts.

Just last year, the Kingsville Independent School District made incredible strides in recognizing the achievements of their students by forming a Special Olympics Lettermen Jacket Committee to raise funds to purchase letterman jackets and patches. According to the chairman of the committee, Tim Acosta, "Something like (official recognition) would make the lettering process a lot easier. It makes it official that these kids should be included."

HB 1645 will require school districts that allow high school students to earn letters for academic, athletic, or extracurricular activities to allow high school students who participate in the Special Olympics to earn a letter.

"We want our Special Olympics athletes to feel included in their high schools," said Guillen. "With this bill, we can ensure all our high school athletes share in the long-standing tradition of being recognized for their achievements."

Representative Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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