

By: Middleton

H.B. No. 803

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1  
2 relating to equal parenting orders in suits affecting the  
3 parent-child relationship.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Section 153.001(a), Family Code, is amended to  
6 read as follows:

7 (a) The public policy of this state is to:

8 (1) assure that children will have frequent and  
9 continuing contact with parents who have shown the ability to act in  
10 the best interest of the child;

11 (2) provide a safe, stable, and nonviolent environment  
12 for the child; and

13 (3) encourage parents to share equally in the rights  
14 and duties of raising their child after the parents have separated  
15 or dissolved their marriage.

16 SECTION 2. Section 153.134, Family Code, is amended by  
17 adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

18 (c) If the court renders an order appointing the parents  
19 joint managing conservators under this section, the court shall  
20 enter a possession order under Subchapter F-1 that provides for  
21 equal parenting, unless the court determines that order is not in  
22 the best interest of the child, in which case the court may enter:

23 (1) a standard possession order as provided by  
24 Subchapter F; or

1           (2) another order regarding possession that the court  
2 determines is in the best interest of the child.

3           SECTION 3. Chapter 153, Family Code, is amended by adding  
4 Subchapter F-1 to read as follows:

5                   SUBCHAPTER F-1. EQUAL PARENTING ORDER

6           Sec. 153.351. AUTHORITY TO ENTER EQUAL PARENTING ORDER.  
7 Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a court shall,  
8 as an alternative to the standard possession order under Subchapter  
9 F, enter an order providing for periods of possession of a child in  
10 accordance with this subchapter if the court:

11           (1) appoints the parents joint managing conservators  
12 under Section 153.134; and

13           (2) determines that the order would be in the best  
14 interest of the child.

15           Sec. 153.352. PERIODS OF POSSESSION UNDER EQUAL PARENTING  
16 ORDER. (a) Subject to Subsection (b), a court may enter an order  
17 under this subchapter that provides that each parent has the right  
18 to possession of the child under a schedule specified by the court,  
19 provided that:

20           (1) the schedule may not grant possession to a parent  
21 for a number of days each year that exceeds the number of days of  
22 possession granted to the other parent for that year by more than  
23 five days; and

24           (2) the schedule must alternate on a yearly basis the  
25 parent who is granted possession for a number of days for the year  
26 that exceeds the number of days granted to the other parent.

27           (b) A court shall provide parents with the opportunity to

1 select by agreement a schedule for possession described by  
2 Subsection (a), subject to the court's determination that the  
3 proposed schedule is in the best interest of the child. If the  
4 parents do not agree, the court may order possession under any  
5 schedule described by Subsection (a).

6 SECTION 4. The enactment of this Act does not constitute a  
7 material and substantial change of circumstances sufficient to  
8 warrant modification of a court order or portion of a decree that  
9 provides for the possession of or access to a child rendered before  
10 the effective date of this Act.

11 SECTION 5. The change in law made by this Act applies to a  
12 suit affecting the parent-child relationship that is pending in a  
13 trial court on the effective date of this Act or that is filed on or  
14 after the effective date of this Act.

15 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.