



Date: September 30, 2020

To: House Committee on Public Education

From: Bexar County Education Coalition

Re: Request for Information, Interim Charge 1[A]

House Bill 3 (HB 3) was a historic bill that modernized a school finance system that was in desperate need of repair. The development of this monumental bill began during the 85th legislative session with the creation of the Texas School Finance Commission. For an entire year, school finance commissioners heard hundreds of hours of testimony from national school finance experts to classroom teachers. The incredible labor of the commission was directly reflected in the content of HB 3 as almost every one of the recommendations of the commission was included in the bill and adopted unanimously during the 86th legislative session.

And while elements of HB 3 are still being implemented, the increase of the basic allotment, the creation of innovative programs, the investment in early childhood education, and the enhancement of recapture formulas have already created positive change in almost every single district across Texas. The diverse school districts of the Bexar County region were able to utilize the increased support of HB 3 in ways that suited the needs of each of their unique districts. Every one of the Bexar County region districts have utilized, or is hoping to utilize in the case of some unimplemented sections of the bill, every section of the bill. Over the last year our member districts have implemented a Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) that will make lasting change in a rural part of our county, expanded critical services to McKinney-Vento and school-age parents at a critical time when resources are scarce, and expanded high-quality full day Pre-Kindergarten programs to thousands of children. Additionally, because HB 3 recognized the need to update recapture formulas, several of our regional districts who were deeply in recapture or verging on recapture, had their payments significantly reduced or removed completely. Virtually every part of HB 3 positively affected every corner of the Bexar County region.

The substantial work of the House Committee on Public Education that resulted in HB 3 recognized the extensive and unique needs of the over 1,000 districts across Texas, and it also demonstrated that significant changes in public education take time to

implement and time to show lasting positive effects. From the TIA to updated Compensatory Education Allotment, the state of Texas will see incredible effects in the coming years, if we keep these critical investments in place. As Chairman Huberty recently said, “HB 3 was and remains a sustainable approach to K-12 education for the future, even during down economic times.”¹

While the investment made by HB 3 was revolutionary for the state and done without the pressure of a court order, the increase to the basic allotment and the funding of critical educational programs largely made up for significant cuts made during the last financial crisis and filled critical funded gaps made by outdated formulas. Texas is still trying to recover from past cuts, restore programs, and staffing levels. Additionally, even with 6.5 billion dollars infused into Texas public schools, our state remains in the bottom quartile when it comes to per pupil funding. Because Texas educates ten percent of this nation’s children, the state has a significant responsibility to ensure Texas’ 5.5 million children receive the best possible education, especially as we continue to live through and recover from a global pandemic.

This is a critical time to *invest* in public education, the backbone of our economy, not take funding away. The Bexar County Education Coalition (BCEC), like Chairman Huberty, also believes this could be Texas public education’s finest hour. In fact, during this pandemic, our schools immediately provided food, needed devices, mental health services, held blood drives, and ensured close to 180,000 employees and close to 360,000 students and their families continued to feel connected, cared for, and had access to education.

Question 1: Can the state delay implementation of the teacher incentive pay program to push it out to the next biennium? If so, what would be the impact on the current budget, as well as budget implications for the 2022- 23 biennium?

The TIA is making life-changing differences for Bexar County teachers. Somerset ISD, one of the first recipients of TIA, has already given their teachers significant raises, and twelve more of our area districts are currently creating robust teacher evaluation systems to implement their own TIA in the coming years. The development and the implementation of these plans takes substantial time and investment from the participating district and pausing TIA has, at best, the potential to slow critical momentum and, at worst, waste already spent public dollars. Additionally, the program so far has come under the HB 3’s original estimate (\$90 million compared to the \$140 million originally budgeted) and is especially small in comparison to the amount of

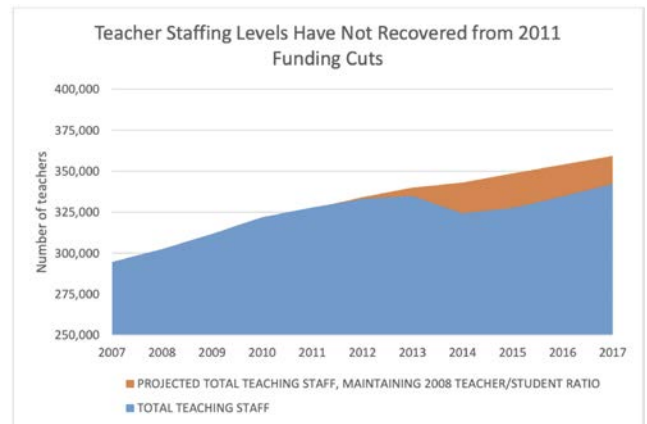
¹ The Tribune, “Opinion Editorial by Dan Huberty” - <https://www.ourtribune.com/editorial/23743-opinion-editorial-by-dan-huberty.html>

funding HB 3 dedicated to non-education related items like property tax relief. BCEC opposes the pause or delay of this program in HB 3 that we know will make differences in the lives of educators and the children that they serve.

Question 2: Does the state have any obligation to ensure that newly awarded salaries are carried forward from year-to-year all other conditions being equal?

Our teachers have been given impossible task after impossible task during this pandemic, from creating entire online classes in a week during the spring to managing both in-person and virtual classes during the fall. Texas, especially as we recover, needs to commit to our teachers through consistent investment in their careers. HB 3's passage brought in on-going raises and investment in and for our Texas teachers, and a statutory commitment to on-going raises. Texas does have an obligation to teachers, especially as they have carried an incredible burden over the last several months.

Furthermore, one of the largest costs that Texas education faces each year is turnover. According to a study done by Alliance for Excellent Education, teacher turnover costs approximately \$170 million dollars every year.² Especially in critical economic times, Texas cannot risk teachers leaving the profession for higher paying positions. Texas needs to ensure teaching is a well-paying profession that will attract our state's best and brightest.



BCEC truly believes that the House Committee on Public Education will continue to hold the needs of our State's public schools close during the upcoming legislative session. As many of the committee members lived through, the last round of education budget cuts cost the state deeply and only last year started to recover.

BCEC knows that this committee will do whatever it takes to protect the worthy and needed investments in our state's most precious commodity - our students. BCEC district's members wish to thank the committee for the time, labor, and consideration on these issues and look forward to the continued partnership during the coming session.

²Alliance for Excellent Education, "On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers" - <https://mk0all4edorgjxiy8xf9.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf>



The members of the Bexar County Education Coalition (BCEC) are districts that collectively care and educate approximately 350,000 students, 60% of whom are economically disadvantaged, and are suburban, urban, fast-growth, recapture, military, and rural independent school districts ranging in enrollment sizes from 1,000 to 100,000 students. BCEC members also employ close to 200,000 citizens of this great state.