

Written Testimony of Bob Popinski
Director of Policy
Raise Your Hand Texas
1005 Congress Avenue, Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78701

Before the House Committee on Public Education
The Honorable Dan Huberty, Chair
September 30, 2020

Interim Charge 1 (B): HB 1842 (84R), HB 22 (85R), **SB 1882 (85R)**, and HB 3906, which relate to public school accountability, assessment, interventions, and district-charter partnerships. **Monitor the ongoing progress of the Texas Education Agency's implementation and rulemaking of the A-F rating system**, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and public school sanctions and interventions.

KEY POINTS

- Pause the state's A-F accountability rating system and create a working group to develop a new school accountability system that appropriately measures all of the factors of a high-quality education
- Continue to allow campus partnerships to access higher charter-level funding to implement innovative programs

Chairman Dan Huberty and Members of the Committee:

We would like to thank Chairman Huberty and the members of the House Committee on Public Education for monitoring the progress of our state's A-F system and Senate Bill 1882, which relates to funding for district partnerships with outside organizations.

Pause the State's A-F Accountability Ratings

As Texas' public education system adjusts to new instructional approaches and deals with technology access issues due to COVID-19, state policymakers should take this time to reevaluate whether our accountability system appropriately measures all the factors of an effective education. Our public schools are being asked to do more than ever, but our A-F rating system is primarily based on one test given on one day. In grades 3-8, the STAAR is the only measure used in determining district and campus grades. These grades ignore other essential indicators of quality education like extracurricular activities, health and safety issues, and community, family and student engagement.

COVID-19 caused an abrupt transition to remote learning and, for some students, a complete loss of instructional time due to a lack of internet access. As a result, our 5.4 million students returned to school in the fall of 2020 with more pronounced academic and social-emotional needs.

To effectively address each student's needs, teachers must use appropriate and timely assessments to better inform instruction, address student learning gaps, and provide appropriate feedback to parents. Schools already have a number of locally developed diagnostic tools that can be used to meet these needs. Especially in the wake of COVID-19, teachers should be focused on addressing learning losses and improving instruction—not testing.

Texas must suspend its use of a punitive A-F accountability system for the 2020-21 school year and seek any waivers needed from the U.S. Department of Education. The Legislature should also establish a statewide accountability working group to assess the effects of COVID-19 and begin developing a new school accountability system that appropriately measures all of the factors of a high-quality education.

Maintain SB 1882 District Partnerships

SB 1882 partnerships allow school districts to claim the same funding and exemptions from state law as state-authorized charter operators and should be made more accessible to school districts as local charter authorizers.

If applied appropriately, SB 1882 offers exciting possibilities for districts and institutions of higher education to expand early college and dual credit relationships to create more opportunities for students. Other potential partnerships involve relationships with major employers to train students for technical roles through apprenticeships and career and technology courses. The greatest benefit in SB 1882 is its flexibility, allowing each community to pursue a unique set of relationships that meets its local needs.

CONTACTS

Michelle Smith, Ph.D.

*Vice President of Policy and
Advocacy*

(c) 512-466-0238

Bob Popinski

Director of Policy

(o) 512-617-2553

David Anderson

*General Counsel and Policy
Analyst*

(o) 512-617-2129