

September 30, 2020

To: House Committee on Public Education
Re: Request for Information, HB3 Question 1

Dear Chairman Huberty, Vice Chair Bernal and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for creating the opportunity for public input on the implementation of HB3, and specifically the question on the Teacher Incentive Allotment. My view is that we should **NOT** delay or suspend this critical strategy that represents a once in a lifetime chance to reframe how we value teachers in Texas.

HB 3 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?

I came to Texas in 2003 as a member of the Rio Grande Valley corps of Teach For America, and have worked on staff at TFA since 2006; between 2006 and 2008 I was responsible for the over 675 new TFA teachers in South Texas, and in my current capacity since 2014, TFA has recruited, selected, trained and supported over 2,700 new teachers for Texas' high need students, schools and districts.

Our work at TFA focuses on the critical role of high-quality leadership in changing the reality of inequities in attainment and outcomes for low-income students. During my time in the classroom and supporting teachers and leading teams to support our educators, I have come to find that the work in front of our teachers, especially teachers leading students in low-income communities, is incredibly complex, challenging and requires a commitment of both the head and the heart. Further, I know from experience that while our current outcomes in Texas, and our country, do not yet fulfill the aspirations of equality of opportunity, a transformational teacher can radically alter the life trajectory of their students.

Recently, we interviewed Jessica Gonzalez, a member of the 2019 TFA corps; Jessica shares a powerful testimony of the impact of a teacher on her life:

Little did I know that as a third grader, my teacher Ms. Madeline "Maddy" Mavrogordato, a 2004 TFA-RGV corps member, would radically change my educational trajectory and to this day continues to shape my professional aspirations. Our journey continued as she advised me throughout my college application process. As an undergraduate, she fiercely advocated and helped me navigate the higher education system. My journey with Maddy continues stronger than ever— we've become family. Our paths ultimately led us both into classrooms. While she is now a professor in the College of Education for Educational Administration at Michigan State, I followed her footsteps and am a TFA-RGV corps member and 6th grade ESL English Language Arts teacher. I am a testament to the ways in which Teach For America expands educational opportunities for children.



Jessica Gonzalez (left) and Madeline Mavrogordato (right) walking on the Michigan State campus.

Ms. Gonzalez has just begun her career as an educator, and like so many others, she seeks to make sense of the role of educators amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Her current district, Pharr – San Juan – Alamo ISD is not yet participating in the Teacher Incentive Allotment, but PSJA was an applicant to the Cohort A Timeline¹.

If the legislature suspends or delays implementation of TIA in 2021, many educators like Jessica will miss out on the opportunity to grow their salary in recognition for their positive impact on students and their school community.

Another district in Region One, San Perlita ISD, is participating in TIA with 5-Year Full Approval. Located in rural Willacy County, **San Perlita ISD lists 269 students in 2018-2019. In that school year, the district employed 24 teachers**². The impact of TIA in San Perlita is significant; in the first year of recognition, the district can offer significant incentive payments to six teachers (or close to 25% of their teaching staff) for their extraordinary impact in the community.

The program will pay the district's selected teachers incentives ranging from \$7,186 to \$26,811, depending on their designations, Peña stated.

*"Their commitment to the San Perlita ISD community and the students it serves is evident as they have expressed a desire to not only become a more effective teacher but also serve as a role model for their peers," district officials stated*³.

School systems in rural Texas, like San Perlita ISD, have an opportunity to transform their human capital strategy in new and significant ways given the Teacher Incentive Allotment.

¹ https://tiatexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/TIA_LOI_Submissions_Accessible_031920.xlsx

² <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2019/srch.html?srch=D>

³ <https://www.valleymorningstar.com/2020/08/26/new-state-program-picks-san-perlita-school-district/>

Broadly, a solid body of research has considered the impact of salary on teacher recruitment and retention, and much of that research points to a correlation between higher salary options and increased teacher production and retention:

- Research indicates that state financial incentive programs have the potential to direct teachers to shortage areas and ensure they stay, but they lose their lure if they are not sufficient, sustainable and paired with improvements to working conditions
 - Diversified pay can entice high-performing teachers to high-needs schools
 - Competitive pay floors can help address teacher shortages⁴
- Research shows that earning potential influences the diversity of the teaching profession, and teachers of color contribute to increased student performance⁵
- Another study found that a one-year \$5,000 bonus program (or approximately 10% salary increase) targeted to high-performing teachers working in the lowest-performing schools in Tennessee was effective at retaining teachers.
 - “Importantly, though, attrition rates for these teachers climbed significantly after the bonus program ended, and the study did not find any difference between the retention rates of bonus recipients and non-bonus recipients after the two-year period. **This suggests that the bonus may have only been effective while teachers received the additional money.**”⁶

HB3 is an incredible accomplishment and given our state’s monumental investment in public education in 2019, I am prouder than ever to call Texas my home, and to work in public education. While our state is facing challenges we have never seen in our lifetimes, I know that the most important investment we can make is in our future. My experience tells me that the most important investment we can make for our students is in leadership in the classroom that resets our collective view of what great teachers can inspire and lead their students to accomplish. **The Teacher Incentive Allotment is a powerful tool in securing a stronger future for Texas. In the end, we cannot legislate excellence, but the TIA can help us recognize and reward it.**

My best,



Robert Carreon
Vice President, Public Affairs, Texas
Teach For America

⁴ <http://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Financial-incentives.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/07/13/453102/give-teachers-10000-raise/>

⁶ https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Solving_Teacher_Shortage_Attract_Retain_Educators_REPORT.pdf. Page 12