



Sara M. Bonser
Superintendent of Schools

September 30, 2020

The Honorable Dan Huberty
Texas House of Representatives
Committee on Public Education
Submitted by email to education@house.texas.gov

Dear Chairman Huberty:

Plano ISD is responsible for providing a high-quality public education to more than 50,000 students in our area. Our schools are routinely named the number one reason new residents move to Plano, and we thrive on these high expectations from our community. With this letter, we are providing input on the Public Education Committee's [Interim Charge 1](#) as it relates to our experiences in Plano ISD.

Interim Charge 1[A]: *HB 3, which relates to public school finance and public education. Monitor the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) implementation of the bill, including the extensive rulemaking process and broad unintended consequence authority of the commissioner. Examine the pay raises districts have provided to staff and the various approaches adopted to differentiate these salary increases according to experience.*

Plano ISD applauds and appreciates the investment the 86th Texas Legislature made in public education through House Bill 3 (HB3). The impact on Plano ISD was a reduction in recapture of approximately \$95 million.

The teacher pay increases contemplated in HB3, however, did not result in prescribed raises for teachers in our district due to the fact that the raises were tied to revenue gained and Plano ISD's "30% of gain calculation" did not generate a positive number. Without a local decision to give graduated pay increases based on level of experience, our teachers would have been left without raises.

We believe that one of the most positive impacts of HB3 is the State's increased funding for its share of public education, which provides some relief to our local taxpayers and reduces recapture statewide. We are concerned, however, that the current economic conditions that are negatively impacting our State revenue and budget will affect the sustainability of the combination of additional funding for public education and the property tax compression that resulted from last session. It is essential that we prioritize the continued funding of public education above the continued compression of property taxes in the event the state is unable to meet the funding demands for both. Plano ISD believes that funding for school districts should not be reduced below the 2020-2021 levels, especially in light of the unexpected financial burdens and lost revenue that we are experiencing this year as a result of COVID.

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 TEA'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.

Plano ISD believes that the impact of COVID on student achievement will be long term. The use of assessments is critical in understanding a student's mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. However, due to the circumstances that have emerged since March, we believe it is reasonable and prudent to modify the A-F system of accountability to mitigate the unintended consequences related to the single administration of the STAAR exam in the 2020-2021 school year. We believe the letter grade cut scores should be reset to reflect the absence of the second administration of the STAAR. In addition, local districts must have discretion to identify students requiring accelerated instruction based on local criteria as opposed to standardized statewide criteria. Furthermore, districts who are high performing should be allowed additional flexibility to incorporate local control into accountability systems.

Interim Charge 1[C]: SB 1873 (85R), which relates to reporting certain school district health and safety information. Review the report on physical education prepared by the TEA and determine what, if any, next steps are needed based on the data collections. Related to Behavioral Health (Joint charge with Committee on Public Health) • HB 18, which enhances school safety and mental health resources for students and school personnel and works to reduce the stigma around mental health conditions. Monitor the process by which state agencies coordinate to implement the legislation and their compliance with various requirements, including providing required guidelines and resources to schools.

Plano ISD feels strongly that there are unfunded mandates that could be eliminated in order to repurpose funds to prioritize mental and physical health of students, as well as hire additional school counselors, nurses, social workers and essential staff to better address mental health in our schools. The continued prioritization of funding for social and emotional learning curriculums for all grade levels is essential.

Interim Charge 1[F]: SB 11, which creates the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium to facilitate access to mental health care services through telehealth and expands the mental health workforce through training and funding opportunities. Monitor the creation of the consortium and agencies' rulemaking processes. Review how school districts are spending their school safety allotment.

The COVID environment has proven the value and importance of telehealth. Through partnerships with SMU and Children's Health, Plano ISD has continued to provide counseling and telebehavioral health to our students. In addition, prior to COVID, we were part of a pilot program for telehealth in several of our schools with Children's Health. The ability to keep kids in school and provide telehealth or telebehavioral health support is an opportunity to provide the wraparound services to students and families that are in high demand. Any funding in this effort is well spent, as a healthy student is a happier and more-able learner.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the implementation of HB3 and other important legislation from the 86th Legislative Session that has had an impact on Plano ISD.

Sincerely,



Sara Bonser
Superintendent of Schools
Plano ISD