

To: Chairman Huberty and Vice Chairman Bernal  
House Public Education Committee

Re: Request for Information, Interim Charge 1, Question 1

Chairman Huberty, Vice Chairman Bernal, and members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a response to Interim Charge 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?*

YES Prep Public Schools is home to over 15,000 Texas students and 925 educators. We are writing to strongly urge House Public Education and the entire Texas Legislature to continue the Teacher Incentive Allotment's current and projected funding levels as-is, **without any deferment.**

Our public school system has invested time, money and resources into developing a fair and rigorous local designation system. Through that system, we are able to fund increased compensation for our top teachers while providing them incentives to teach at low-income campuses, a critical need for our system. As a reference, 91.2% of YES Prep students are economically disadvantaged.

At YES Prep, we recognize teachers as the key lever driving student growth and achievement, and we are committed to ensuring each student has equitable access to an effective teacher in every class, every day. Our extraordinary teachers see students come into YES Prep with reading and math skills below grade level. YES Prep teachers support students to help them grow academically and earn college degrees at four times the rate of their peers. We work tirelessly to attract and support the best teachers—those who are highly effective, always learning, and passionate about teaching every student at the highest level. The state's teacher incentive allotment is bolstering our efforts to provide more of these teachers with higher pay as they work hard to support the educational success of every child.

As an organization, YES Prep dedicated significant time and resources to developing the Teacher Incentive Allotment program since last January. Our cross-functional district team spent three to four months meeting and working on our application and data submission for Cohort A and invested \$28,000 of our own funds to cover the initial cost of designation for our teachers. Now that we are approved, we have started a communication campaign to inform our teachers of this exciting and unique opportunity and continue to invest significant time in designating our next cohort of teachers and expanding our application to include elementary teachers. We expect to see the impact of the Teacher Incentive Allotment on staff engagement and retention this year. Given this allotment supports high priority courses and student growth in core curriculum, we anticipate this to continue to support student achievement.

One of the biggest challenges for any education entity is its ability to keep its highest performing teachers in its system and in the classroom. Prior to the Teacher Incentive Allotment, the only avenue teachers could use to increase their compensation was promoting into non-classroom positions. This cycle of losing the best teachers in often the classrooms where they are needed the most, poses a challenge across all educational entities. COVID-19 and the pandemic have impacted the teacher pool significantly, making it more difficult to recruit high quality teachers to YES Prep. Having the Teacher Incentive Allotment provides us the ability to showcase the increased earning potentials that teachers can have at YES Prep. This opportunity further assists our efforts to sustain strong recruitment and retention incentives.

The Teacher Incentive Allotment is a pathway for our educators to increase their income earlier in their careers, a strong incentive for retention. It also focuses attention on equitable distribution of talent. We are grateful to Texas for creating a program that will attract and retain the very best educators. We believe our students deserve nothing less. We ask that the 87<sup>th</sup> legislature follow through on its commitment to Texas educators by funding the Teacher Incentive Allotment in full.

Sincerely,

Sarah Landsman

Managing Director of Advocacy

YES Prep Public Schools