

Date: September 30, 2020

To: House Public Education Committee, Chairman Huberty and Vice Chairman Bernal
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 your request for information on 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?*

In Clint ISD, we value innovation and seek to create new opportunities for our students and staff that provide a quality, student-centered environment. This manifests itself through strategies like an intersessional school calendar to minimize learning loss during long school breaks, strong mentorship programs for our educators, and most recently, working to implement the Teacher Incentive Allotment.

We recognize many of our 11,000 students -- 85% of whom are economically disadvantaged, and 70% of whom are English language learners -- require greater support than their peers. We also recognize that our students are just as capable at succeeding than students from any other part of the state with any other background. Much of that learning starts with the teacher at the front of the classroom.

As assistant superintendent of Clint ISD, I am focused on ensuring we attract and retain high-quality teachers. Over the past five years, we have seen our retention rates increase from 69% to 97%, and we are committed to using the Teacher Incentive Allotment to ensure we continue to retain our strongest educators. TIA provides teachers with pathways to making more money sooner in their careers, especially if they teach at low-income or rural schools, incentivizing the best teachers to stay in schools like those in our district. It is important to reward these teachers for choosing to teach students who need them the most, and TIA helps to make this happen. Allowing low-income students to be taught by Texas' top teachers will help ensure quality classroom experiences for those with the greatest need.

As a Cohort C district, we will not see TIA funding flow to our teachers until 2022, but our TIA planning is already underway. We have invested significant time and resources into ensuring our local designation system is rigorous, fair and up to the standards set by the Legislature and the Texas Education Agency. This work is well worth the effort because we know that this will ultimately benefit our students. It is our goal to help students improve by keeping the most high quality teachers in the classroom and TIA helps us to continue these efforts in a way that brings dignity to the teaching profession. Research has shown that having an effective teacher in front of students has the potential to increase a classroom's lifetime earnings by \$250,000¹. With TIA,

¹ Raj Chetty: Measuring the Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood

we are not just boosting compensation for our best teachers; we are increasing our students' chances of higher salaries as well.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly turned everyone's world upside down and for teachers, this is no different. Many people have experienced loss of jobs and decreases in pay, and it is imperative that this does not happen to our teachers. This is a crucial time to continue investing in education: there is not a better investment.

Due to COVID-19, our teachers have been forced to innovate in ways we have not seen before. Staff have really stepped up during this time and have worked extremely hard all summer to provide quality education even in the midst of a global pandemic. We are now more than two months into our school year, and our teachers have gone the extra mile, implementing teach-from-home equipment and skills. Research shows that teachers are the most important school factor in determining student achievement, providing more to increase support for teachers, not decrease it, especially during a time such as this. Teachers deserve that extra level of compensation with TIA because they are continuously working hard for our students. **TIA tells our teachers that we value them and their support of our students is not going unnoticed.**

Peer-to-peer support for teachers is a cornerstone of Clint ISD, and we believe TIA will provide strong avenues for improved mentorship. If we want to be able to improve teacher effectiveness at our lower performing campuses, it will be imperative to have our TIA teachers go into those campuses to work with the students while mentoring other teachers..

The continuation of TIA and other programs like this will help us maintain our quality teachers in the classroom, instead of losing them to central-office roles or other professions for higher pay. TIA gives greater respect to the teaching profession that is long overdue. For the first time, we are able to compensate our highly effective teachers at a rate, which they deserve. We know that elevating the profession to a higher status will attract even more people to the profession who desire to learn and hone the craft. **Clint ISD students deserve the opportunity to have highly effective teachers in every classroom, and we're thrilled to be on track to participate in the program's third cohort.**

There is no doubt that, as lawmakers, you will encounter many difficult decisions in the upcoming legislative session. As you weigh investments against limited resources, please focus on items like House Bill 3 that make the most significant impact on students and the future of our state. The Legislature must continue funding the bill and this allotment in particular, in its entirety, in order to highlight Texas' commitment to high quality teachers and equitably distributing top talent amongst our students. The best way we can improve student outcomes is investing in highly effective educators and the Teacher Incentive Allotment allows us to invest specifically in our best and brightest. The students in Clint ISD, and across Texas, deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J Littlejohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James Littlejohn
Assistant Superintendent, Clint ISD