



La Joya

Independent School District

Superintendent's Office

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September 30, 2020

To: House Public Education Committee, Chairman Dan Huberty and Vice Chairman Diego Bernal
Re: Request for Information, Interim Charge 1, Question 1 (Teacher Incentive Allotment)

Chairman Huberty, Vice Chairman Bernal, and members,

On behalf of teachers of La Joya ISD, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit a response for information on Interim Charge 1, 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?*

The La Joya Independent School District, located in the western portion of Hidalgo County, consists of more than 226 square miles stretching west of Mission to Sullivan City, and includes the smaller communities of Palmview and Peñitas. Boundaries extend from the U. S. border formed by the Rio Grande River to the 13-mile line near McCook.

La Joya has a strong educational history. The first schools were established during the first half of the 19th century when citizens from a few towns and villages set up a place of learning. One of the first schoolhouses was built in western Hidalgo County's Havana in 1849. The rock and adobe structure was far from the little red schoolhouse one might envision; however, it sheltered the children of the area and afforded them a quality education. This humble building gave way to today's La Joya Independent School District, which consists of 23 elementary campuses, 8 middle schools, 3 comprehensive high schools, Jimmy Carter Early College High School, College & Career Center, HOPE, Thelma Salinas Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Early College High School, La Joya Early College High School, Academy of Health Science Professions/STEM and a partnership with (13) Hidalgo County Head Start Program locations.

La Joya ISD takes pride in our employee compensation program and in providing our teachers with leadership and growth opportunities. However, due to the geographical area of our schools, and our student demographics, our teacher turnover rate is high, as teachers tend to move closer to other nearby larger cities to work with less challenging students. The Teacher Incentive Allotment will allow our district to level the playing field and offer financial opportunities to our teachers while recognizing the highest levels of effectiveness, which we feel strongly, will have a positive effect in our recruitment and retention efforts. Thus, having the Teacher Incentive Allotment is based on the need to increase the retention of our effective teachers as well as to incentivize other teachers in our district to aspire and pursue higher levels of performance.

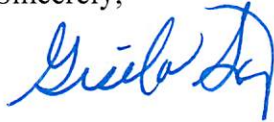
The TIA has served as a great motivator for teachers to perfect their craft and to stay in the profession. One of our designees, Ms. Mary Silva, has had to work two jobs for the past fifteen years to make ends meet. She uses her personal finances to help students within the community by buying them clothes, school supplies and groceries when needed. When she was told of her designation, and of the additional funds she would receive, the first thing that came to her mind was of now being able to help

more of her students.

Although the monetary incentive will be appealing to effective teachers, we are passionate about growing the capacity and effectiveness of all our teachers and recognize high levels of effectiveness, and the Teacher Incentive Allotment offers this opportunity. Nonetheless, we recognize that the increase in salaries will change lives and will motivate additional teachers to strive to work harder and prepare our students to achieve academic success.

We kindly ask that you take this into consideration and that these allotment funds continue to flow to the best and most deserving teachers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gisela Saenz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Gisela Saenz
Superintendent of Schools