

To: House Public Education Committee, Chairman Huberty and Vice Chairman Bernal  
From: Aldine ISD and other supporting school districts  
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[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.*

***This letter is submitted on behalf of the seven school systems below, collectively educating 225,564 students.***

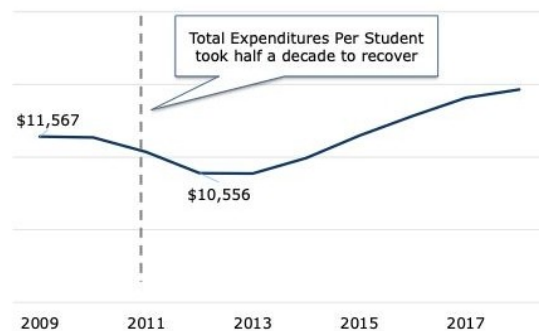
Texas public schools began the 2019-2020 school year buoyed by the Legislature's successful efforts to address public school finance reform during the 86th legislative session. We were encouraged and excited by lawmakers' commitment to adjust school funding streams to account for more nuanced support of individual students and the creation of innovative strategies to spur student achievement. We began forming planning committees for improvements like high-quality, full-day PreK, providing increased dyslexia screening and dual-language programming, and identifying methods to improve the postsecondary handoffs of our high school graduates. We shared great news of increased compensation for teachers and staff that was made possible by House Bill 3, and we planned for targeted support for students experiencing poverty, made possible by the compensatory education spectrum. After years trying to recover from the 2011 budget cuts (and resulting nosedive in academic outcomes), we saw a path to educational equity and improved student outcomes. **We cannot change course on improved funding and investments that came from the monumental 2019 legislative session.**

## 2011 Funding Cuts As A Result of 2008 Recession Marked The Onset Of A Decline In National Education Rankings

*With Low-Income Students and Students of Color Being Disproportionately Affected*

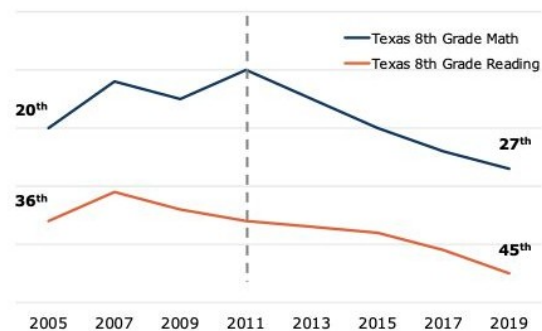
### In 2011, Texas Cut \$5.4B on School Spending...

*Texas Total Expenditures Per Student<sup>1</sup>*



### ...Which May Have Led to Worsening Student Outcomes that Have Yet to Recover

*State Rankings by Subject, NAEP (based on average scores)<sup>2</sup>*



Source: 1. Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Reports, 10 Year History for State Total Report; 2. National Assessment of Educational Progress Reports (NAEP), 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading and Math 2005-2019

Nobody could've expected that just 8 months after the 2019-20 school year began, a global pandemic would cripple our ability to provide in-person learning to our students. We could not foresee the depth or reach of COVID-19's impact on our schools, or on the state budget.

We worked quickly to pivot, largely made possible by waivers from the Governor's office and the Texas Education Agency. We doubled down on our strategies for engaging students and worked to adjust learning interventions for those with greater needs. House Bill 3 gave us direction: focus on providing an education that prepares students to meet academic milestones and be successful in life after high school. Though COVID-19 threw a wrench into our implementation plans, it did not stop the work. In fact, it provided greater clarity on where -- and how -- to focus our attention.

**The Early Literacy Allotment** created a new funding stream for our low-income and English language-learning students, and we've used those funds to work toward ensuring all eligible students have access to full-day, high-quality PreK. Our runway may be longer now due to virtual learning this fall, but the goal still remains: provide effective early learning environments for students to close opportunity gaps between students experiencing poverty and their peers before the chasms are fully formed. With last year's expected learning loss and the potential for more in-school interruptions in the future, funding for full day pre-K for eligible students and teacher professional development in teaching reading, will be even more critical to support our youngest, most challenged students. We cannot repeat the significant reading proficiency declines that occurred due to funding cuts made in the last recession.

The more nuanced approach to **compensatory education funding** marked a significant improvement in how Texas identifies and supports low-income students. By increasing the base compensatory education weight from .2 to .225 and moving to a sliding scale up to .275 based on concentration of poverty, school systems now have access to additional funding directly tied to equity. This foundational improvement has enabled us to think critically about differentiating support across students experiencing varying levels of poverty.

Better still, the funding formula's order of operations creates greater focus on this compensatory education weight, and **maintaining the scale at its intended HB3 level will ensure school systems receive the flexible resources needed to provide care and support for our low-income learners, who have been most impacted by COVID-19.**

**CCMR Outcomes Bonuses** are a revolutionary incentive for us, as they recognize the importance of our high school advisors and counselors. Financially rewarding districts for performance (rather than the traditional "stick" of A-F accountability) and providing even greater financial reward for outcomes of low-income and/or special education students gives us a north star: ensure students complete a successful postsecondary transition after they graduate.

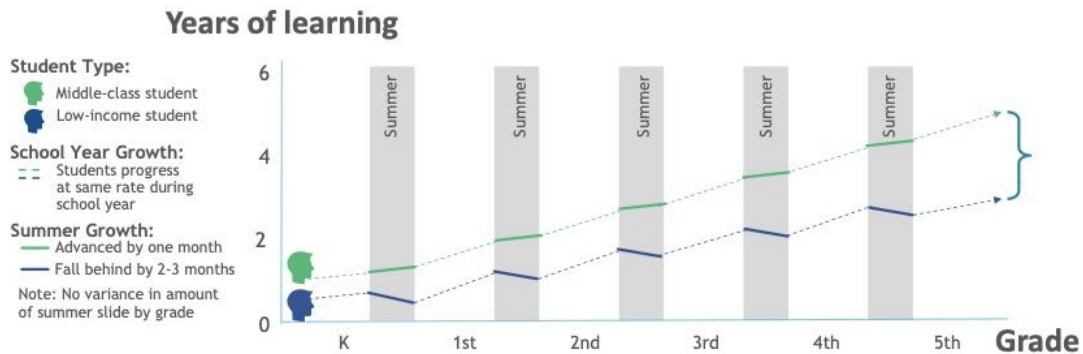
COVID-19's impact on these bonuses remains murky, but the Legislature must continue its commitment to this funding stream, as it underscores the role of PreK-12 education in equipping our future workforce. We appreciate the additional CCMR provisions, including the reimbursement for SAT/ACT testing and extending CTE credits into middle school. This set of CCMR programs, along with mandatory FAFSA completion, sets students up for success when they leave our halls.

Optional programs included in HB3 have also made it possible for us to invest in and plan for some more innovative strategies. The **Additional Day School Year** allotment has become even more critical since COVID-19. The 'COVID cliff' is something every one of us is actively combatting since returning to school this fall, and many of us are working to restructure school calendars to prepare for a potential second wave of COVID in the coming months. Closing these learning loss gaps is a long-term strategy, and the Legislature's commitment to funding half-day attendance for certain students will prove instrumental to ensuring students don't fall even further

behind in future summers or extended school breaks.

## Declining Achievement During Summer Breaks

*The impact of **summer slide (pre-COVID)** may create a **gap** of up to three grade levels for low income students by fifth grade*



Graph completed by Boston Consulting Group. Source: Cooper, H., Borman, G., and Fairchild, R. (2010). "School Calendars and Academic Achievement" In: J. Meece and J. Eccles (Eds.), Handbook of research on schools, schooling and human development (pp. 342-355). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

Finally, we have been so incredibly inspired by our teachers who have stepped forward to deliver quality instruction in the face of a global pandemic. We've watched them innovate, turn their bedrooms into virtual classrooms, and watched them take time to individually connect with families virtually during 'Meet the Teacher' nights. Our very best educators have doubled down to find ways to ensure students' emotional, social and academic needs are met, whether through a mask and face shield for in-person instruction, or through a one-on-one virtual conversation. **The Teacher Incentive Allotment places a premium on our top teachers and has, once again, provided clear focus on our human capital strategy.** Many of us are actively planning, or have already implemented, programs that make us eligible for drawing down Teacher Incentive Allotment funds. We have put forth resources to identify which teachers do best among certain student demographics, and we are committed to placing them in classrooms where they can thrive alongside the students. This particular funding stream is life-changing for teachers, narrative-changing for students who never wanted to pursue teaching because of low pay, and world-changing for students with access to the best teachers in the state.

House Bill 3's power is in its cohesive approach to student outcomes. Each provision lends itself to a more equitable funding formula that sets students up for success after high school graduation. We urge you to maintain HB3 in its entirety -- stay the course with dedicated funding and strategic investments. Our children -- and the future of our state -- depend on it.

Sincerely,

Aldine ISD  
Garland ISD  
Grand Prairie ISD  
Hays CISD  
Hutto ISD  
Lockhart ISD  
Mesquite ISD

