

Educate Texas  
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September 30, 2020

**Re: Request for Information Related to Interim Charge 1A**

Honorable Chairman Huberty and House Public Education Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the House Public Education Interim Charge 1A, HB 3, which relates to public school finance and public education. Your continued commitment to keeping Texas public schools whole is needed now more than ever. Texas philanthropy is also committed to its role. The power of public-private partnerships cannot go to waste.

Philanthropy Advocates is a group of more than 50 family, corporate, community and private foundations and United Ways from across Texas that collectively represent Texas' smallest communities and largest cities. In 2019, we joined forces with Educate Texas, a trusted change agent in education, to better advocate together on behalf of our state's 7 million public and higher education students. Educate Texas serves as a thought partner to legislative offices in efforts to attain 60x30TX goals.

This past legislative session, our research and advocacy efforts contributed to broad-based support for one of the most significant state investments in our public education system. Philanthropy Advocates appreciates the historic passage of HB 3.

Led by your committee, the passage of HB 3 was a major and innovative step forward for the children of Texas. In its final version, Texas' 5.4 million students were provided with dozens of reforms that benefit their educational journey. The bill signifies months of dedication and countless hours of study spent identifying investment opportunities to set our state on a stronger path, ensuring all districts benefitted and that there was a focus on equity.

At the core of many of the changes in HB3 is the need to ensure that "every student with greater needs should receive additional, equitable resources to allow all students, regardless of background, the chance to achieve and live a productive life. These include higher needs attributable to low income, language fluency, special education needs, or mental health."<sup>i</sup> Many of the elements in House Bill 3 are designed to increase the equity within our school finance system and provide greater support for students that need the most help. These elements include:

- An increase in the Compensatory Education funding for all students in poverty, and further increases in the weight depending on the level of poverty of a campus community,
- The Teacher Incentive Allotment, which provides significant additional compensation for the most effective teachers who choose to teach in a high-poverty or rural campus,
- Additional funding for low-income and English Language Learners in K-3rd grade,
- New funding provided through the dyslexia allotment to support increased supports for those students with dyslexia or related disorder,
- Additional funding to provide elementary schools with up to 30 additional days of school and
- Up to \$7,000/student in additional funding for districts that meet College, Career and Military readiness goals for students who are the most vulnerable.

We urge you to stay the course on your commitment to funding Texas schools and honor the hard work of the School Finance Commission and the Legislature in designing a system to increase equity and opportunity for the 5.4 million Texas students.

We also encourage the Legislature to ensure the state fully funds education and other supports for students and families in the next legislative session. Given the historic challenges facing schools, institutions of higher education, teachers, families, and students during the pandemic — as well as the extra technology and PPE costs that school districts are taking on — our education system needs your leadership.

Philanthropy will continue to play its role in a public-private partnership with the state by providing grant dollars to schools and nonprofits to support our fellow Texans. Since the pandemic began, Texas philanthropy has been working overtime to ensure their communities most critical needs are met. While philanthropic dollars can offer immense support, they cannot be depended on alone. The state must fulfill its role as well.

In the midst of the pandemic and jobs crisis, Texas philanthropy knows firsthand that teachers, students, and families are also facing extraordinary difficulties outside of the classrooms that affect what happens inside the classroom. Therefore, it will also be important for state leaders to fully fund other supports and services for kids and families during this unprecedented time.

In the coming legislative session, we encourage state leaders to address the revenue shortfall next by using the Rainy Day Fund, pursuing additional pandemic relief funds from Congress, and exploring other revenue options.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**John Fitzpatrick**  
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Educate Texas

**Jennifer Esterline**  
*Director*  
Philanthropy Advocates, a Collaboration with Educate Texas

Please contact Jennifer Esterline, Director of Philanthropy Advocates, a Collaboration with Educate Texas, at [jesterline@cftexas.org](mailto:jesterline@cftexas.org) with questions, comments, or requests.

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<sup>i</sup> School Finance Commission report, page 16. Available at:  
<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Texas%20Commission%20on%20Public%20School%20Finance%20Final%20Report.pdf>