



Dr. Susan Kincannon, Superintendent
Waco Independent School District
501 Franklin Avenue
Waco, Texas 76701
(254) 755-9473

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 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?*

This letter is submitted on behalf of Waco ISD, home to 991 educators and 14,541 students. We strongly urge the Texas Legislature to continue the Teacher Incentive Allotment's (TIA) current and projected funding levels as-is, **without any deferment**.

Though we are not receiving funds this biennium, we have already invested significant time, money and resources to develop a fair and rigorous local designation system that will enable us to reward our top teachers with increased compensation and provide an incentive to teach in a district where over 90% of our students are experiencing poverty. For a number of years, Waco ISD struggled with teacher retention and saw annual teacher turnover rates in excess of 25%. The incentive that TIA provides to teach in a district where a large percentage of students are experiencing poverty is another tool to retain our best teachers.

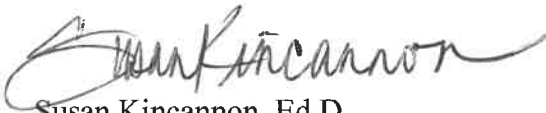
Waco ISD is a "Cohort C" district. This means that we are in the first year of implementing a system that will result in teachers earning a TIA designation. Led by a teacher expert group and a core committee made up of teachers and other district leaders, we already have invested significant district time and money to shape a system that best reflects our district. Our teachers are excited about this opportunity. We have held presentations at every campus and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers. We have also seen an abundance of support from our school board, principals and district advisory committee – all of whom are also excited about what this program means for Waco ISD teachers and students. To take away the funding for TIA now, would irrevocably damage the trust placed in our district and in the state.

We know that highly effective teachers drive student outcomes. TIA is helping Waco ISD create an organization where we are supporting and growing our teaching workforce through a coaching culture. As Waco ISD implements TIA this year, we will have access to a more holistic view of our teachers and will use this information to help us close the opportunity gaps

that face many of our students. By increasing the number of effective educators in the district, we will also increase access to effective educators for our students who need them the most. Teaching has always been one of the hardest jobs in a district. In the face of COVID-19, however, the workload on our teachers has increased significantly, because many are simultaneously using multiple models of instruction (i.e., remote and in-person) to serve students. Yet, while the job description of teaching has changed, we have not been able to significantly change the compensation. This TIA program offers a way for the state to recognize and reward those that are making a difference in student achievement. The TIA is significant not only for the funding allotments but also the affirmation of a designation on a teacher's certificate.

The TIA provides pathways for educators to make significantly more money earlier in their careers, and it focuses attention on a more equitable distribution of our talent. We greatly appreciate the Legislature's recognition of attracting and retaining the very best educators, and we ask you to follow through on your commitment by funding the TIA in full.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Kincannon". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Susan Kincannon, Ed.D.
Susan.Kincannon@wacoisd.org
Waco ISD (14,541 students)