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To the Members of the Texas House Public Education Committee:

Texas AFT is writing regarding 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.*

- *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?*
- *Question 2: Does the state have any obligation to ensure that newly awarded salaries are carried forward from year-to-year all other conditions being equal?*
- *Question 3: Is the state capable of providing the additional financial resources so school districts can maintain the new salaries awarded post-HB 3?*
- *Question 4: What impact does the "no new revenue - tax cap" of 2.5 percent have on a school district's ability to continue the pay raises or changes in salary scheduled adopted for the 2019-20 school year?*

House Bill 3 (HB 3) is one the most sweeping school finance bills passed in Texas' recent history. The bill provides more money for Texas classrooms, increases teacher compensation, reduces recapture, and cuts local property taxes for Texas taxpayers.

The boost to teachers' salaries is one of the elements that makes HB 3 historic and recognizes the overdue need for Texas teachers to be compensated at a level that reflects their education and experience as professionals in the field. The National Council for Teacher Quality's 2017 annual report found that despite being highly valued in the community, teaching professions are among the lowest paying jobs for college graduates in the United States. Public school funding for education is a major problem in our country, especially in low-income communities. Prior to the passage of HB 3, Texas teachers earned about \$56,000 annually on average, after adjusting for the state's cost of living. This is significantly less than the average teachers' pay of nearly \$63,000 nationwide in 2019. It will be good to see how the needle has moved when there is data that reflects the salary adjustments from HB 3.

Texas educators are in dire need of salary adjustments that cannot be handled with a onetime fix. HB 3 begins the process of addressing this issue by increasing the Basic Allotment (BA) in the school funding formula from \$5,140 to \$6,160, which will increase the minimum salary schedule

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(MSS) between \$5,500 - \$9,000 per creditable year of service. This is thanks to the rule that any year the BA is increased, districts must allocate 30% of their year-over-year budget increase toward full-time employee compensation increases with 75% of that going to teachers, counselors, nurses, and librarians. If these salary gains are not carried forward, more teachers likely will leave the classroom at a time when they are desperately needed to support our students academically through the COVID-19 crisis.

While Texas AFT appreciates the critical raises included in HB 3, we have continued concerns that the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) does not have the same impact. Although TIA has been touted as a way to pay the “best” teachers more money to retain them — while also offering some stipends for them to work at low-performing campuses to raise test scores — there are significant flaws. The TIA should not be seen as any kind of solution to the state’s history of underpaying educators.

In terms of scale, it’s important to note: The TIA program will apply to only 3,650 teachers from approved districts, benefitting fewer than 1% of Texas teachers.

Of the 26 participating districts approved for a Local Designation System as a part of TIA, about half of them are charter schools. Considering that charters enroll fewer than 6% of Texas public students, this is not equitable.

Additionally, Texas AFT is concerned that approved programs are using standardized test results to identify the “best” teachers. While HB 3 forbade the commissioner from requiring test scores be used, standardized test scores appear to play an outsized role in selecting the campuses.

One of the public school districts approved for TIA, Dallas Independent School District, uses a system in which nearly one-third of a teacher’s score is based on testing. Our members have noted numerous problems with this, including being judged on test scores for areas they do not teach.

Incentive systems based on testing create a disturbing disincentive to teach struggling students, unfairly compensate teachers, cause high turnover and low morale, and exacerbate the problem of teaching to the test. While HB 3 was critical in addressing teacher pay issues, it did not solve them completely. Until teacher salaries meet or exceed the national average, so called “merit pay,” does not create the incentives sought.

Texas AFT strongly supports the aspect of TIA that uses of National Board Certification (NBCT) to reward educators. NBCT is one of the most respected professional certifications available in education and provides numerous benefits to teachers, students, and schools. It was designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide. NBCT’s certification process requires teachers to spend a lot of time thinking and writing about their students, it leads to more focused, intentional teaching. Many states and school districts across the country recognize the value of NBCT and provide stipends to certified teachers. In Washington State, NBCT-certified teachers can earn up to \$10,000 more per year. In Alabama, there is a \$5,000 per year stipend. Maryland used to provide \$2,000, and local counties tacked on another \$2,000. The state now pays a stipend of \$1,000 to \$2,000, depending on whether it’s a comprehensive-needs school.

Research conducted by the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center at Mississippi State on NBCT's impact on improving student achievement in Mississippi in 2017 showed kindergarten students taught by an NBCT are 31% more likely to achieve a proficient score on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment than other students. Third grade students taught by an NBCT are 11% more likely to achieve a proficient score on the MAP Test in English Language Arts than other students. A study in 2015 by the Center for Education Data & Research at the University of Washington Bothell used seven years of statewide data to study the effectiveness of board-certified teachers in Washington. The authors found that board-certified teachers produce nearly six weeks of additional learning gains in middle school math classrooms and one to two weeks of additional learning gains in elementary classrooms and middle school reading classrooms. They also found that teachers who achieve board certification on their first attempt produce four and a half weeks of additional learning gains compared to those teachers who pursue but never achieve board certification. Teachers who go through the NBCT must be re-certified every five years. This is a process that fosters continued growth and professional development of educators in their fields of study.

Instead, pay-for-performance schemes ultimately hurts the students with the most needs, especially at a time when educators are reinventing how public schools deliver instruction and students are still acclimating to new ways of receiving instruction. Higher base salaries for all Texas teachers are a prerequisite for quality public schools.

Currently \$6.5 billion of the \$11.6 billion in the bill is allocated for new public education spending, with the remaining \$5.1 billion going to subsidize property taxes.

Given the state's difficult budget climate, Texas AFT believes the state should not use its limited resources to keep tax rates low in high-wealth districts. Instead, all available funding must address the biggest areas of educational needs so the state can ensure it is able to fund the components of the bill that will have the greatest impact on students and teachers, specifically:

- Ensuring funding for future adjustments for inflation and student growth to maintain the purchasing power of our schools.
- Guaranteeing public school worker salary raises can be maintained.
- TIA should be reserved as an incentive for teachers pursuing National Board Certification.
- Increased funding weights for Special Education and English Language Learners are maintained.

Thank you for considering our comments as part of your future recommendations and planning.

Sincerely,

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