

Sept. 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 your request for information on 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?*

[Can pay raises help rural Texas districts retain teachers?](#)

That was the question raised last year by the Texas Tribune as state lawmakers (through this committee's leadership) discussed and eventually passed House Bill 3. The historic school finance reform measure did, in fact, give many of our teachers raises through an increase to the minimum salary schedule and basic allotment.

These across-the-board adjustments were necessary to stabilize the entire system, but they are not, on their own, sufficient solutions to the problem of teacher recruitment and retention in rural Texas. Our approach to that issue must instead be targeted and equitable, which is why **we enthusiastically support the Teacher Incentive Allotment.**

**Rural Texas school districts are at a major disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining a corps of excellent educators.** We have a small population base from which to draw, while simultaneously competing with nearby suburban and urban districts that can offer a higher salary. We have smaller staffs with which to engage potential hires and limited opportunities for growth. Many of our districts and campuses primarily serve students experiencing poverty, a challenging population that may deter veteran educators.

**The Teacher Incentive Allotment recognizes these disadvantages, and provides a critical tool to address them.** By heightening bonuses for designated teachers who choose campuses with higher poverty rates, the Legislature has recognized and rewarded the additional time and attention these students deserve. By multiplying this allotment for designated teachers who choose rural campuses, the Legislature made it possible for these districts to compete with their neighbors on a more level playing field.

**We have already dedicated limited time and resources to investing in this new opportunity.** Each of the undersigned has already begun preparation to apply for Cohorts C or D of the Teacher Incentive Allotment, in spite of smaller staffs with which to do so. The work required of Cohort C applicants, in particular, has been substantial. We cannot afford for this effort to go to waste. Our teachers and students demand and deserve more from us after House Bill 3's commitment to recognizing educators.

**The Teacher Incentive Allotment will elevate the teaching profession, and encourage more talented young people to enter our classrooms and communities.** Fewer and fewer high school graduates are choosing a career in education. By continuing to fund this important allotment, we can ensure our high school graduates see teaching as a viable career path. Giving effective educators a reason to come to (or stay in) our towns and cities, and paying them high salaries will have ripple effects across our economies.

There is already significant uncertainty around school policy and funding at the moment. **It is unfortunate this request for information has generated even more.** As superintendents, we are well aware of the difficulties of public finance. It is our hope that the Teacher Incentive Allotment is a tool we will use to weather our present circumstances, not something lost in the face of them.

Teachers are the number one in-school factor affecting student achievement. The Texas economy of tomorrow is likewise dependent on what our kids are learning now. The best way we can invest in our students, and our future, is by investing in effective educators. We urge you **to keep the promises you made to Texas teachers through House Bill 3 and continue to fund the Teacher Incentive Allotment.**

We appreciate your time and consideration.

In gratitude,

Superintendent Shawn Mason  
Crosbyton ISD (364 students)

Superintendent Mario Alvarado  
San Isidro ISD (223 students)

Superintendent Scott Martindale  
Iola ISD (536 students)

Superintendent Chris Wade  
Smyer ISD (436 students)

Superintendent Alejos Salazar  
Lasara ISD (368 students)

Superintendent Morgan Wright  
Spurger ISD (372 students)

Superintendent Stu Musick  
Navasota ISD (3,039 students)

Superintendent Alan Andrus  
North Zulch ISD (338 students)

Superintendent Michelle Hartmann  
Pawnee ISD (318 students)

Superintendent Virginia Liepman  
San Augustine ISD (754 students)