

LETTERHEAD

Date: September 30, 2020

To: House Committee on Public Education

From: Dr. Sean Maika, Superintendent, North East ISD

Subject: Interim Charge 2 Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public input on Interim Charge 2. I served on the Governor's taskforce, Operation Connectivity, and witnessed digital barriers in North East ISD and around the city. While my District's families had greater access to devices and connectivity than others in San Antonio, we still experienced challenges during virtual learning. I have outlined two items for your consideration.

1. Improvements must be made to internet capacity across the state, and we must have a statewide standard for reliable, high-speed broadband access. Surveying communities to determine if residents have internet coverage is not enough. The quality of the internet connection must be defined to ensure that digital learning is optimized.

While teachers and students are learning virtually, high-speed broadband connectivity has become a necessary school supply. All of our schools had internet coverage, but some struggled with bandwidth within the building to host teachers "zooming" with their students back home and in the classroom. We also found that while our families had internet access at home, the speed of that connectivity was not enough to connect multiple devices or stream video.

North East had to provide hotspots in some of our buildings, in our parking lots and to our families to increase connectivity.

2. Similarly, a standard for electronic devices should be created and adequately funded. While North East had many devices to lend to our students, many of them were older and unable to handle current operating system updates and security patches. While there is great flexibility in how school districts spend the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment, there is not enough funding after a textbook adoption to invest in technology.

We have primarily relied on our voters to approve bond programs that include technology infrastructure and devices in order to maintain technology across the District. However,

given that bonds programs often last a duration of five years, we are always in replacement mode for devices aging out rather than truly expanding to our inventory.

If you have any questions about this submission or technology needs within North East ISD, please contact me 210-407-0541.