

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3376

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Hearing Date: April 6, 2021 10:00 AM

Dee Carney

Texas School Alliance

Austin, TX

Texas School Alliance Position on HB 3376

April 5, 2021

The Texas School Alliance comprises 43 of Texas' largest school districts, serving over 2 million students or nearly 40 percent of the state's total pupil enrollment. Our students represent 44 percent of the state's economically disadvantaged student population, 50 percent of its English Language Learners, and 43 percent of all at-risk students in the state. The organization works on issues that will improve educational quality for Texas students, particularly those in large and urban districts.

The Texas School Alliance opposes HB 3376 for the following reasons:

Current law allows districts to increase the M&O tax rate when an increase in expenditures is needed to respond to a disaster. This increase is for one year only, and the tax rate reverts back down in the following year. Currently, this provision would apply to school districts in response to the statewide disaster declared by Governor Abbott in response to COVID-19.

While the pandemic may not have caused damage to buildings that need repair, it has certainly created increased costs as districts have invested heavily in technology, personal protective equipment, additional cleaning, more bus routes, and so on while they continued educating students both in person and remotely over the past year. More significantly, going forward, districts will face the need for additional investment in our students, as some of them return to our schools with learning gaps, learning loss, and social / emotional needs. TSA districts continue to advocate that state leaders apply for and pass on funding made available from the federal government to help districts with these costs through CRRSAA and the American Rescue Plan, but since Texas has not yet applied for the funds, nor told districts how much funding, if any, they might receive, a few districts appear to be planning for the use of temporary disaster pennies as part of their pandemic response.

If additional federal funds do become widely available, then the need for these pennies would certainly be diminished.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this bill as we move through the legislative session.

For further information, please contact Dr. Curtis Culwell, Executive Director, at curtis@texasschoolalliance.org or by telephone at 512.485.7878.

Amanda Brownson

TASBO

Austin, TX

We respectfully are testifying in opposition to House Bill 3376. Current law allows districts to increase the M&O tax rate when an increase in expenditures is needed to respond to a disaster. This increase is for one year only, and the tax rate reverts back down in the following year. Currently, this provision would apply to school districts in response to the statewide disaster declared by Governor Abbott in response to COVID-19.

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We look forward to continuing to work with you on this bill as we move through the legislative session.