

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Select
For HB 2

Compiled on: Friday, November 10, 2023 10:07 AM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: November 10, 2023 9:00 AM

Ann Thompson, Mrs.
Retired Public School Educator
Hurst, TX

Thank you for supporting measures to ensure school safety and making sure the measure or mandates are funded adequately.

Jessica Scott
Self
Houston, TX

Hello, I am a parent of a child in Spring Branch ISD and a supporter of public education. It is the duty of our elected officials to fully fund the Texas public school system. All children in Texas deserve access to a free and appropriate education. I am asking you fully fund public schools first before considering vouchers to subsidize private education with public funds. Cutting funds not only affects the students but it affects the access to school choice programs.

Kay Lunceford
Retired
Dallas, TX

Thank you.

Teresa Lopez
Cornerstone Church School Choice
San Antonio, TX

Requesting your support for school choice. I cannot afford to send my children to a private school without the financial support this bill would provide.

Dawn Sand
Self, teacher
Bryan, TX

We should have more lock down drills and fewer fire drills. We have far more students killed in schools each year by active shooters than fires.

Aleisha Fuller Moore

Self

Lantana, TX

I am opposed to using public dollars to fund private school vouchers. Our public schools deserve to be funded at an increased rate. I DO NOT support the establishment of an education savings account plan! Do NOT use public dollars to provide wealthy families with funds to send their children to private/religious schools. Our country has had a stained history with withdrawing students from public schools as a way to avoid having certain children (typically affluent) to attend school with more diverse populations in public schools. When segregation was no longer legal and public schools became integrated, a large number of prejudiced/racist families removed their children from public schools. They created "Christian" academies to ensure that their children would not attend school with diverse children. Fast forward to our current situation. There is a heavily funded movement to cater to those who would prefer to see public schools privatized. It all comes down to money. If we follow the money trail then we really will see why our governor would be so insistent on vouchers. Families who choose to send their children to private/religious schools, have every right to do so. They SHOULD NOT be given access to an educational savings plan. I DO NOT support educational savings plans/VOUCHERS! I am a proud public school educator who believes that ALL children should have access to a quality, well-balanced public education.

Beatrice Salinas

Lujan

San Antonio, TX

Praying for the grant programs money sending to the schools safely funds.

Patty Goldschmiedt, Mrs

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Felicia Nash, Dr.

Self, physician

Austin, TX

I am adamantly opposed to this bill and the negative repercussions it will have on our public school system. The public school system ensures that the future of our state - the children - are educated. In diverting money for private school use, we are shooting ourselves in the foot by crippling our current system even further. The public school systems in Texas are already at a disadvantage and this will create even more problems. While I understand that some will choose private school, it makes no sense for money that our system desperately needs is spent elsewhere. I suggest fixing what we have and then we can consider vouchers and their utilization.

Santhiya Jawahar
School
Argyle, TX
Ok

Jennifer Pederson
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

Vote no on any and all bills that would take public funds and give them to private schools or for homeschool use. Vote no to vouchers. Put Texas teachers and students first. Increase teacher pay and fund public schools.

Elizabeth Johnston, Mrs
Elementary Educator/self
Greenville, TX

Yes, students, employees, and parents should have a safe environment to work and learn.

Maria Trevino
Fossum MS- McAllen ISD
MCALLEN, TX

Education is going through a crisis. There are too many teachers retiring or changing careers due to the lack of support, low pay, excessive workload, and stressful environment. Teachers must earn HIGHER PAY and equitable benefits to balance their economy. Let's put the money where it belongs: in the public school system. WE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. NO MORE TESTING, and let's focus on teaching and learning.

Gregg Scott
Self - software architect
Midlothian, TX

I wholeheartedly support this bill as it provides needed funding to support schools in the implementation of student safety.

Heather Huffaker
Self school counselor
Weatherford, TX
Vote no to vouchers

Helen Panzera
Self
Plano, TX

I strongly oppose this and any voucher bill. Please restore education funding after the severe cuts in the late 2000s.

Dee Mullins
Self
Huntsville, TX

I am totally opposed to vouchers. Tell the truth. Charter schools can select the students they want. If there is a student with special needs they can opt not to take. No accountability.

Audrey Persch

Self

Houston, TX

It's time to fund public schools in this state! ESAs/vouchers do not belong in Texas!

Martha Eberle, Ms

self -- R.N., retired

Dripping Springs, TX

Against -- if the lege was serious about school safety, it would put gun safety into law. I want to get REAL about gun safety, NOT putting armed police into every school, nor asking teachers to be in charge of gun safety, arming herself, to protect students. She is there to teach; police are to be in the streets, protecting neighborhoods. Texas is an embarrassment, putting the cart after the horse. GUN SAFETY, then we do not need police in schools.

Heidi Langan

Self

Austin, TX

The Safety bill that passed in the regular legislative session was not fully funded. Public schools cannot implement this mandate without more funding.

Please make sure that you fully fund all safety programs that you require of public schools.

The best way to make Texas public schools safe would be gun control!

Gayla Roberts

Self

highway 31 East, TX

Public funds should go to public education and not private schools.

Anne Darr

Self

Fort Worth, TX

The facts speak for themselves. Public schools welcome EVERY child, create communities, provide educational programming and related services for students with disabilities, are held accountable, and are required to comply with state and federal laws. Private/parochial schools pick and choose their students, are ill-equipped to serve students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, are not governed by representatives elected by the public, and are not held accountable for student academic outcomes or responsible spending. Therefore, diverting funding from public schools and giving that money to private/parochial schools is a reckless, irresponsible, inequitable way to spend the taxpayers' money as well as an invitation for corruption, misuse, and fraud.

Agnese Randdolf, Dr

Cornestone Christian schools

San Antonio, TX

Parents choice is important. We Choose to raise our children in Christ and we believe is the generation that is needed in the near future

Batya Berger

SELF

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Batya Berger

Houston Texas

Natalie Cannon

Self- parent of school-aged children & educator

Austin, TX

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts. I am opposed to public funds going to any for-profit or private school. Public funds are for public education- where all kids are accepted and educated. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates.

I am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and/or health coverage of certain public school employees. This ploy is keeping needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers. This makes absolutely no sense, and it reeks of quid pro quo and "playground bully." Don't mess with Texas public schools, and don't gamble on our children's future for political gain.

I do, however, strongly support and encourage the state to fund public school children at the "proposed voucher rate" of \$8,000 per child per year. That isn't enough for most private school tuitions, but it would be a substantial increase to the current basic allotment for public schools, which is woefully inadequate. I would also love to see that funding based on enrollment in a school rather than attendance, which seems to be the idea for the ESAs. Schools have to staff for enrollment, not attendance. Allowing STAAR to be replaced with a different norms-referenced assessment is also a fabulous idea that would save the state millions of dollars. These are great ideas that need to be applied to public schools, not private schools.

Gordon Martinez

Self

Richardson, TX

I continue to oppose my taxes being wasted on a Fourth Special Session and oppose HB2/HJR1. Free public schools are enshrined in the Texas Constitution and the Legislature should commit to fully funding and fully resourcing those schools as intended by the writers of the Texas Constitution.

Nicola Matsukis

Self /Cox Elementary PTA

Cedar Park, TX

Stop messing with our public education that is already suffering and underfunded. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Angela Madera, Mrs.

Lewisville ISD

The Colony, TX

Protecting public school students and staff is an important citizen action. Thank you.

Kristin Shelton

ATPE

Austin, TX

Thank you for serving. I have been a public school teacher in Texas for 30 years. I taught one year overseas on an Air Force base. Over the years, school safety has become a critical issue regarding public schools. Please do what you can to help us provide places where students can come to learn without fear of being gunned down. Teachers are struggling having to keep safety at the front of everything we do. Currently, I teach PK and have to keep my classroom door locked, for fear of a shooter coming in. My classroom does not have a restroom so my four and five-year-olds have to leave our room to walk down the hallway to the restroom. Upon return, they knock on our door and my educational assistant or I go over to let them back in. Please consider for a moment how tiring this is throughout a school day. We do not leave our door unlocked for fear of being on the news as the teacher who wasn't keeping the kids safe when the gunman arrived. How ridiculous. You're invited to come to my classroom and see for yourself how this affects our day. I am in Round Rock ISD, a short 25 minute drive from the Capitol. Please help us make public schools as safe as possible.

Marlene Bullard

Self

Tornillo, TX

Public schools should be provided the adequate funding to meet the state mandates passed the last 2 legislative sessions regarding safety measures and policies. Our schools shouldn't have to apply for grants, most likely competitive grants, for the funding needed to meet mandates imposed upon them.

Michael Overton

self, Teacher

Weslaco, TX

Please vote yes on this bill. Students, staff and teachers should not have to be in an environment where violence is a daily occurrence. School district funding is inadequate, so necessary and desirable programs like school safety enhancements don't happen.

Jonathan Whitman

self

Richardson, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Catarina Wylie
Self
PITTSBURG, TX

We do not need ONE armed school employee on campus. It's ridiculous to assume one person with a side arm can outgun a lunatic with an AR 15. Common sense gun control is the smarter solution. There were PLENTY of armed police at Uvalde and they did not want to go up against n AR 15.

Colleen McKinney
Self - Citizen
Sugar Land, TX

Make public schools safer. Why does it take so much to ensure schools are not shot up and children killed?

Carina Galvan
Self
Dallas, TX

School safety and state highways are important. I wish to have a fund established for both.

Susan Stewart
self
Pflugerville, TX

No Vouchers ever, fully fund our public schools so all children have access to a world class education. Release the \$32+ Billion dollars of our tax money that you all are hoarding and return it to our public schools. Truly be "for all children".

Rose Marie DeHoyos
Self
San Antonio, TX

Oppose school vouchers. Public money for public education. Don't weaken our public schools. Texas students are failing behind. We should have the best school system in the country instead we are #43. This is disgusting. Build on the future of Texas .

Delcie Thomas
Self, Teacher
Beaumont, TX

Please make this happen. Thank you.

Delcie Thomas
Beaumont Early College High School
Beaumont, TX

We need to fully fund public schools. No to vouchers, no to
Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises.

David Pate
self, CFO
Rowlett, TX

I am opposed to ESA's/vouchers. Public funds should not be given to private schools or home school families without the exact same financial and educational accountability requirements that public schools are subject to. If the financial and educational accountability requirements are necessary for school districts with publicly elected boards then private schools and home schoolers should be subject to them as well.

Sincerely,
David Pate

Natalie Truax
Self
Garland, TX

I support public schools and vouchers would hurt them. Please continue to fund our underfunded public schools. Please do not approve these vouchers that would take money away from kids and teachers who need it.

moshe stewart
self teacher
Houston, TX

To whom this may concern,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every precious child, deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

?

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Gary Stiles, Chief of Police
Gatesville ISD Police
Gatesville, TX

I thank you for taking up school safety in this Special Session. The current environment in hiring police officers is proving difficult for many districts or local police agencies across the State. It would be very helpful if the State could assist with funding for salaries to help the districts hire or retain officers working at the schools. My agency is fully staffed right now, but I am looking at placing school resource officers at several adjoining districts under my department. Most of them cannot afford to hire an officer with the \$15,000 allotment per campus. Any help the State can provide would be greatly appreciated.

ReShaun Webb
Rainbow Children's Station
SAN ANTONIO, TX

We need this bill to include children who are in Pre-K. We want to 4-year-olds that qualify for the public school to have the option to use those same funds to attend our childcare centers. We need this to include PreK.

Mary Myers
Self, Texas Realtor
PLANO, TX

How can Texas see continued growth if we have an inferior public school system! Vote NO to VOUCHERS, YES to PUBLIC SCHOOLS!! Yes to funding public school teachers, staff and retirees! NO to vouchers!!! Texas should not be known as one of the lowest paying teacher salaries in the US! Texas should not be known for taking taxpayer money to fund private schools that most people can't afford! NO to vouchers for private schools! Keep our taxpayer money where it is needed in public schools!!!

Brad Englert
Self
Austin, TX

Yes, allocate the funds necessary to improve school safety.

Barbara Radovich
Self
Wimberley, TX

Guns are the problem! You have flooded dense urban areas with very high powered guns. You have no way to secure the "well-regulated" stipulation on gun purchases. Any disgruntled or mentally ill person can use deadly guns to act out their angry impulses. No guns in school, a really stupid approach. We need really trained people, NOT TEACHERS. Get red flags, have registration like vehicle license with safe storage laws.

Beverly Cherry, Gdn & Sister
BSSLC
Houston, TX

I support this bill for BSSLC

Rhonda Reichel
farm
San Antonio, TX

This better pass

It can only improve public schools because of COMPETITION

It might discourage all the "woke" sexual perversion the public schools allow if they lose students and federal funds it will serve them right I'd like to see prayer back in schools.

Jaylyn Sprinkel, Mrs
Wylie ISD pta
Wylie, TX

I do not support vouchers

Adrienne Conyer
Wylie ISD
Wylie, TX

Fund public schools efficiently and effectively

Karen Collins
Self
Roanoke, TX

Reject vouchers

Self Self
Self
N/A, TX

Chaplains are now allowed, if school districts choose, to provide services to students as part of the school safety and security measures. I support this law. If I may, I would like to request that this bill be revised to allow chaplains the option to receive a Texas teaching certificate (minus the need to complete an educator preparation program because chaplains are limited in what they can do in the schools) or a locally issued certificate. As things stand now, schools must conduct a background check for the chaplains before they can volunteer or be hired. When one holds a Texas teaching certificate, a background check is conducted, and it is a statewide recognition of their qualifications that is accepted at all school districts. Chaplains are first responders. When an emergency occurs they must respond quickly. Allowing chaplains to earn a Texas teaching certificate will enable a school to hire or accept a chaplain as a volunteer rather quickly without delay.

Scott Collins
Self
Roanoke, TX
Reject vouchers

Michael Beck
self
Blue Ridge, TX

This is a need. However, good, responsible, parents and other adults, are a huge resource that should not be overlooked. Schools should not need to be prisons, or fortresses. Yes, additional funds should be allocated, but good volunteers are there and available.

Lewis Lepore
Self / Teacher
Sugar Land, TX

I am for House Bill 2.

Christina Etri
Self
DALLAS, TX

Yes, Texas Legislature should have provided funding for school safety when they passed HB3. This was an unfunded mandate and should not have been passed without this one. Create the fund and provide the money to schools so our schools can meet the criteria for HB3 and our kids will have some measure of safety.

Next up...gun reform! When will we see it, TxLeg?

Marissa Randolph
Self - retired educator
Rhome, TX

The only way to protect schools, our children and our teachers, is to put a limit on the sale of automatic weapons. Period.

Brandy McDonald
Self - church staff
Dallas, TX

I support HB 2. Our schools need better security for the protection of teachers and students.

Tala Nimri
self
Austin, TX

I oppose this bill

Maritza Wong, Mrs.
Self - Stay at home mom
Manvel, TX

This approach to school safety is completely backwards. Please address the guns. There are several bills introduced in this special session that would help keep guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them. There is nothing complicated about the measures that would do that, it's only a lack of political will to do things that would ACTUALLY make students and all Texans safer. The money, the energy, the focus being placed on hardening measures is mentally exhausting as a parent of two public school students. Address gun violence before it has the chance to occur. Thank you.

Marta Fischer
Special Education Teachers (retired because of burnout)
San Antonio, TX

If you pass it find it!

Marta Fischer
Special Education Teachers (retired due to burnout)
San Antonio, TX

If you pass it, fund it.

Donald Corley, Mr.
Self
Godley, TX

No, not at all on this HB1 school voucher bill.

Suzanne Sanders

Self Retired from Public Ed and employed part time as a Licensed Counselor

Austin, TX

Please say NO to Vouchers! It's that simple, and it is no affront to Private or Religious Schools, which have always been in existence. However, now Vouchers are a way that the public's hard-earned Tax dollars are going to be used to FUND these Private Schools, under guise of calling Vouchers "Educational Savings Accounts". Do not violate separation of Church and State by giving our Tax Dollars those who wish for Private Schools for their children.

Landon Turrubiarte

Self - Elementary School Principal

Denton, TX

In favor-the proposed funding structure enables schools and districts to more effectively implement needed and required safety updates for students. This is a great step forward in funding previously underfunded mandates. It is difficult to implement previously passed legislation without the appropriate funds to do so. Thank you for taking a path to remedy the situation.

Stephanie Ellis

Self

San Antonio, TX

Vote Yes

David Rayburn, Retired administrator

Self

Lake Jackson, TX

I oppose this type of bill that ties ESAs or vouchers to public education. It seems that this has become a political battle between our governor and the legislature rather than representatives truly addressing the desires of their constituents. Separate the bills and put them up for a vote by the public. Stop wasting time and money on special sessions. Representatives, it is time for you to start listening to those presently in public education and doing research rather than seeking to advance your political careers. .

Lauren Sicinski

Self

Houston, TX

Texas residents want public schools properly funded and teacher pay raises. We are asking for \$1K increase per child. No vouchers until our public schools are properly funded!!

Heather Horton

Self

Yantis, TX

I am a public school teacher of over 25 years. Please say no to vouchers, academic savings accounts, or any other form that takes away dollars from public schools and gives them to privatized entities...Public schools deserve public money. All children deserve the best public schools. Say yes to fully funding public education and special education..

Dorothy Rayburn, Retired teacher

Self

Lake Jackson, TX

I highly oppose not only this bill but all bills that tie things together for political gain. Four sessions to continually discuss this is ridiculous. School vouchers are not the answer to improving education of our children. You say it won't harm or take away from public education. Are you certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that that will not happen. It seems that increased funding for public schools is long overdue. Please take time to listen to present day educators who can relay to you the educational needs of students. Stop playing politics and listen to those who elected you. Separate the bill and put vouchers to a public vote!

Sharon Spratt
United methodist women
Rowlett, TX

Do not agree - public funds should stay in public schools.

Kelly Lwakatare
Self
Houston, TX

We do not want school vouchers. Please hear us!

Lisa Ingalls
Self- public school counselor
Lewisville, TX

NO vouchers or educational savings accounts for private schools. I've seen so many children return to public school when private schools fail to provide for them. Just last year a 8th grade, private school kid made a mistake on social media. He was expelled. Enrolled in public school and had to go to alternative school for his mistake. Public school educated him for 2 months! And, had to remediate his Algebra skills bc he didn't know how to complete his math assignments and wouldn't have passed the Algebra EOC without remedial help. Private schools don't want to be held accountable. Please don't allow money to leave public schools.

Amelia Montes
self, legal secretary
Garland, TX

If people can afford to send their children to private school, then they should pay that out of pocket. Taking funding from already struggling public schools is the worst thing you guys could do to our children. My son is a special needs student and without certain funding, he and kids like him won't have the accommodations that help them succeed as students. **DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS!**

Robert Zamora
Self/Teacher of 22 years, all in public education
El Paso, TX

Help bring some respect back to our public school system and do the right thing for all of our public school educators that are counting on you.

Angela Blackburn
Self
Huffman, TX

I am opposed to the free for all spending spree for our public schools. Texans are over taxed as it is. There is plenty of money, but you've continued to grow local governments by requiring more and more programs that we already have. These new programs are redundant, and many of them need to be repealed because they usurp prior laws already on the books. The legislature has created law that has weaponized public school safety against parents and given all of the power to superintendents who no longer listen to parents, but are worried about lobbying for more funding over successful academic outcomes for the students. Please stop.

If we have a special session, it needs to be to revamp the way we fund public education to save money, and stop asking the taxpayers to foot a bill we cannot pay.

The course we are in is anything but sustainable! And it certainly is not conservative.

I am opposed to this bill.

Brenda Miles
Self
Stamford, TX
No No No Please

Kathleen Aguilar
Self
Frisco, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers and funding for private schools when our public schools are stretched beyond financial limits to operate.
Yes to more funding for public schools.

Ruth Soisson
Self-Science and Math Tutor/Interventionist
Houson, TX

I just learned that a hearing was held yesterday on HB1 which provides Education Savings Accounts, giving parents the choice to determine the education option that works best for their family. I was told that this was a 2-day hearing and am providing testimony in regard to HB1. I am a “retired” public school science teacher and have observed how the standards and expectations of students continues to decrease each year and the gap between “honors” content and “on-level” content gets larger each year. Our family sent all four of our children to a private school which supported our values for their K-5 education. This was the choice that worked best for us and thankfully we were blessed to be able to do so without any government assistance. Many cannot afford this luxury and only have one choice to keep their children in the school where they are zoned (or to apply to a local charter school if available in their area). With the recent takeover of HISD by the TEA, it is apparent that the schools in the Houston area are not up to par. Parents should be empowered to use an education savings account to educate their child in a different school that meets their standards and supports their family values. Already so many states (30+) are moving toward parent choice in education and having very positive results. Texas parents should be able to have these same choices and teacher unions should stop opposing this effort.

Jennifer Carmack, Mrs
Self
Bandera, TX

My family is in the 12.3 percent of Texas children who choose home education. Thus far, the State of Texas has ignored homeschool students in our state when it comes to education funding. ESA's would support and enrich our home education and tax dollars would follow the child regardless of what sort of education a family chooses. The State of Texas should support parental choice for education by passing ESA's and stop excluding 12.3 percent of its citizens from tax dollars. Thank you.

Mary McCarty, Mrs.
Self, homemaker
Katy, TX

I am a mother of four, aged 14, 12,4, and 1. We have had our children in Catholic schools since the older ones started kindergarten and PreK. Our 14 year old started high school this year and we paid over \$20,000 for his tuition. For the 2024/25 school year we will pay a combined 35-40,000 in tuition. A couple of years after that we will pay 45-50,000. The choice to educate our children privately began as a faith based choice we considered flexible based on our income level. Since COVID shutdowns highlighted all of the issues with public education, and as we’ve witnessed the decline of public education through friend’s children and teachers we know that have left the system, we no longer consider it a choice. My husband was out of work for seven months this year, and we still committed to paying that incredible tuition bill. It’s the last thing to go in our budget aside from food. Obviously we feel that school choice is necessary. Please help us in our commitment to create future adults grounded in good morals and academics designed to create self sufficiency and personal responsibility. I promise they will ultimately contribute more to society than the \$8,000 per year that they “took”.

Tanu Mehta

Self

Austun, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.”

Diane Leggett

Self

Ovilla, TX

No to vouchers! Fund our public schools and teachers! Private schools are not held to the same requirements as public- I do not want my tax dollars funding private schools! I have a special needs son that would not be serviced in a private setting. Quit trying to push this down our throats. Why do you not want our public schools to be funded and successful? They are the heart of the community and are represented by all of the constituents that you serve. Noooo. To. Vouchers!

Kaylea Schultz

Self/stay at home mom

Coppell, TX

Public schools need to be fully funded. Why does a public school get approximately \$6600 per student while the voucher is for substantially more per student? Will the schools receiving the money be required to follow the TEKS, give STAAR, have teachers attend reading academies, provide necessary services for special needs students and bilingual services for emerging English language learners? These are just a few of the items public schools must do. Texas already has school choice and has for many years! Charter, homeschool, private and public schools have been CHOICES for years!! If a private school tuition is \$40,000 per year, a \$10,400 voucher DOES NOT provide a choice for most families! School districts have many unfunded mandates from the legislature over the years. FULLY FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS. NO VOUCHERS!!

Brandi Ratliff

myself as a public school teacher

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. We are already struggling in our district due to the Robin Hood program stealing millions from us. We can't afford anymore school closures or over populate schools.

Karma Yoakem, Reverend

self

Manor, TX

I am against any bill that will give public tax dollars to private schools and institutions. School vouchers do not give parents choice or power, they only enrich private schools that have no accountability to the public.

Martina Meritz

Self

San Antonio, TX

Our public schools are underfunded and understaffed. It is a fundamental right for my kids to have a public school to attend and vouchers are hurting my children until you have adequately funded the public schools. Please support our public school system and say no to vouchers.

Sara Breaux

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose subsidies for private schools at the expense of our historically underfunded public schools. Private school vouchers benefit those who can pay the remainder of the tuition - wealthy parents- and worsen the economic divide in Texas. Our state's schools are already one of the worst in the nation, producing students that are unprepared for college and good jobs. Employers who flocked here to take advantage of favorable tax laws will find it's hard to hire locally from an undereducated populace, especially as parents leave the state to find better education elsewhere.

Elizabeth Elaine Osborne, Dr.

Self

Justin, TX

Please do not hold public schools hostage! We can see the difference! I have students who are served through 504 and IDEA leave for charter or private institutions only to return the following semester. Stories of unqualified staff, not following their plans and needs not being met! Many of my parents state it was huge mistake! But that instructional time is lost and their students are further behind! Please support public schools! The parent have always had an opportunity to choose. This is about taxpayers paying for THEIR choice. Please do not support the undermining of public education!

sarah howery

Self

Dallas, TX

Thank you.

I am a special educator in North Dallas, Richardson ISD, serving elementary students with moderate to severe physical, emotional, and intellectual disabilities, predominantly cerebral palsy and cortical visual impairment. But that is not where their challenges end.

We are a title I school and send food home weekends. I serve refugee families from Afghanistan and Syria. They often do not understand English. Some of them have experienced homelessness and severe trauma. Last year I had a child covered in scars from shrapnel.

I fear that there are no places in Texas in which an ESA could help families with these complexities. These are students with great needs, and the ESAs will create even more hardship for the students I love. I appreciate the increase in the student allotment in HB1, but that is not enough to make me support a bill taking taxpayer money away from public schools.

Marcella Helmke

self/ retired public school employee

New Braunfels, TX

I urge our leaders to remember the valuable public service that Texas public school employees provide to our most valuable resource: our children. Adequate funding for public education should be a priority. This includes ensuring that the employees receive adequate compensation for their work. There is no rational reason to withhold a pay increase when the state has a surplus. Additionally, I feel the legislature needs to stand by public education. It is important to ensure that adequate resources are provided to public education. I believe my tax dollar should support the education of ALL children. I do not agree with my tax dollar going to any voucher, education savings acct, or private school. None of those situations include any oversight by the state to ensure that a quality education is being provided. Parents still have educational choice. Should they want to pursue a private education, they are free to do so at their expense - NOT with my tax dollar.

Elizabeth Wally

Self

Dallas, TX

I oppose.

Christine Collazo

Self, retired public school teacher- 35 years experience

Port Arthur, TX

REJECT VOUCHERS!

Public funds for public schools.

Lea Bratcher

Self

Houston, TX

I believe that every child deserves a chance in order to make our society thrive. Adding vouchers will negatively impact our campus, district and community. I am against this. Private schools have enough resources without taking from the public sector. We don't take from them.

Clint Kerns

Self

Waco, TX

Support hb1

Kenneth Fletcher, Mr

self

Rosenberg, TX

PARENTS NEED CHOICE. I am a classroom teacher and I have witnessed the destruction of the joy of learning of my students. The current system of constant testing and poor discipline management needs to change. That will not happen until schools have proper competition. Our children are no more than a number, a number for attendance and a number for their current practice test score, and they know it. This will not change until schools have proper competition.

TEACHERS ARE NOT BURNED OUT! We are tired of being betrayed by this system where we are blamed for everything. We are tired of having to be an adversary of our district employers so that we may advocate for our children. Passionate, well qualified teachers are leaving in droves because we want a divorce due to your betrayal.

THE MAJORITY OF STATES ALREADY HAVE SCHOOL CHOICE laws in place. Make no mistake. It is perfectly clear that Texas is lagging behind because of the money from the testing related industry.

Billy Moore

Self - Engineer

Magnolia, TX

It is time for Texans to control our own dollars. We want to control who are kids minds learn from.

Rebecca Hart

Self, Behavior Analyst

Plano, TX

Vouchers will cost the government and people more. It will also cause a greater divide between socioeconomic classes. A better use of our funding for education should be to provide the districts more money to fund the actual cost of education.

Mauri Elbel

Parent of students in our public schools

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Lisa Fenstermacher

Self, web specialist

Garland, TX

Say no to HB1. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Please say no to vouchers and keep education funding in public schools.

Megan Davis

Self

Austin, TX

No to vouchers

Marisa Hayes

PTA

North Richland Hills, TX

Please stand for Texas students, teachers, and public school! Vouchers hurt public schools and should not be considered. Fully fund our schools.

Sheila Weathers

Self

Cedar Park, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as "recognized" or to designate them as "exemplary" under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a "nationally board certified" designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, "acknowledged." Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a "recognized" designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the "recognized" designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education's 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as "exemplary." This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the "gold standard" for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as "Recognized" or "Exemplary" is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Sincerely,

Sheila Weathers, NBCT

Lexi Geffken
San Antonio RDSPD
San Antonio, TX

As a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I recognize a struggle that the San Antonio RDSPD faces daily. We have a lack of K-12 district interpreters. These interpreters are vital to the access and success of our DHH students. Sure, agencies interpreters can do, but not all agencies interpreters want to work every school day and they often are not familiar with STEM signs. My program struggles to find reliable interpreters from agencies. Agency interpreters will leave in the middle of the school day to go to another job. This limits the access to the least restrictive environment and academics with general education peers for my DHH students. The San Antonio RDSPD has one amazing and reliable interpreter. She is a district interpreter for San Antonio ISD. She attends all district staff trainings and she is at the school during all school hours. You might wonder why we only have one district interpreter. Many other interpreters with the agency have let me in on why they do not become district interpreters. It is because the workload and hours do not match the pay. In other words, district interpreters are not paid enough. Agency interpreters can work less time, not attend staff developments, and still make a living. Our one district interpreter is only with us because she is loyal. However, there is nothing stopping her from leaving us to make more money as an agency interpreter. My students need reliable district interpreters to make a difference in their lives. Please consider raising the pay for K-12 district interpreters. We need them and they deserve it.

Deborah Baez-Carrasquillo, Mrs.
public school Principal
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1 and any other bills that create a voucher program. I am fundamentally opposed to using public taxpayer money for private schools. Rather than funding our public schools and moving us up from 43rd in the nation, HB 1 shifts money to private schools without the same accountability for those dollars. The track record for vouchers in other states is largely unsuccessful. Public school funding and teacher pay raises should not be held hostage by vouchers! Thank you.

Yi Chen
self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers/HB1. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.”

Crestasha Lozano
Self, interpreter
San Antonio, TX

School districts have difficulty hiring and retaining qualified interpreters largely because of the pay discrepancy between K-12 as compared to other interpreting fields. That including agency and freelancing. Any bill addressing funding for public education needs to include specific set aside funds for educational interpreters to ensure fair access for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. With interpreters pay being so low in the education field there will always be a shortage throughout the schools for equal access communication. I support this bill 100%!

Stephanie Osborne
Self/Childcare
Burleson, TX

Dear Esteemed Members of the Texas Legislature,

I'm here to share an urgent concern close to the hearts of Texas families and dedicated childcare professionals. Our state is a nurturing ground for our youngest, but current funding policies threaten our early education foundation.

Funds meant for licensed childcare centers are being redirected, impacting these vital spaces. The move to public systems shows a decline in academic progress, and economic challenges predict closures of 40% of Texas childcare centers.

These closures bring dire consequences: increased unlicensed care, job losses, and a loss of diverse teaching approaches. To safeguard our children's prospects, we need a policy like successful states, offering "school choice" for pre-K.

The growing support for this cause shows the urgency. We, the people, ask for investments in qualified, accountable childcare centers. Our children's future relies on this decision. The economy may recover, but missed opportunities in childhood development are irreparable.

Thank you for considering this crucial matter. Your dedication to our state is deeply appreciated.

Respectfully,
Stephanie Osborne

Meghan Spagnoli, Teacher
Self
Magnolia, TX

Please consider switching national board teachers to exemplary. This certification is a rigorous process that already vets teachers to determine the exemplary.

Keeya Waiters
DSS
Converse, TX

I request to extra funds for our deaf program

Lydia Martin
Self...retired Deputy Superintendent, Continuous Improvement Consultant
Bedford, TX

**NO to vouchers!!!! Local districts can provide choice for ALL STUDENTS if provided the resources to make it happen. Many districts already do a fabulous job offering choice!
KEEP PUBLIC DOLLARS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!!!**

Mitesh Patel, Mr
Spring Branch ISS Parent
Houston, TX

I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed budget cuts that threaten the funding for Choice schools, specifically within the Spring Branch Independent School District. As a passionate advocate for education and the future of our great state and country, I firmly believe that protecting the funding for these schools in our district is of paramount importance.

Choice schools within the Spring Branch ISD play a vital role in our education system by providing options for highly talented children to receive an education tailored to their unique needs and abilities. These students are the future leaders, innovators, and contributors to our society, and we must ensure they have the resources and opportunities necessary to flourish.

I implore you to stand up for the future of our district, state, and country by opposing any budget cuts that would undermine the education of these highly talented children within Spring Branch ISD. Our future competitiveness, innovation, and success as a nation depend on the investment we make in these young minds.

I kindly request that you use your influence and authority within the Spring Branch ISD to protect the funding for Choice schools and ensure that our education system continues to nurture the potential of every child in our district. Your commitment to this cause would have a profound and lasting impact on the future of our community, state, and nation.

Thank you for your dedicated service to our community and for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your support in safeguarding the education and opportunities of our highly talented children within Spring Branch ISD.

Calista Herbert
Self/Retired
Houston, TX

I don't understand why monies proposed to be set aside for school safety would go to the economic stabilization fund and the state highway fund. This seems like an underhanded way to get money to other areas besides school safety.

Minette Satterwhite
Self
Allen, TX

Our small district in North Texas is horribly underfunded. Lovejoy student only receive \$6,700! WHY? WHY is Texas \$4,000 BELOW the National average. We pride ourselves as a state for being the best. Not when it come to our children, clearly. The current version of HB1 increases the allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,700. The current allotment needs to be raised by at least \$1,100 just to keep up with inflation. Texas public schools are the backbone of our education system. Why are you trying to mess this up any more than it already is? This is embarrassing. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Dawn Wallner
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on school vouchers. I have two children in public schools and love it. Voting for school vouchers is detrimental to our already underfunded schools and teachers. Public education is an essential right that Texas continues to overlook. This is our future.

Loralei Hoggard, Mrs.

Self

Red Oak, TX

As a National Board Certified Teacher and as a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching,, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

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Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Lynn Clark Clark

Nac Cnty Republican Women

Nacogdoches, TX

Let’s make this happen.

Sloane Becker, RDSPD Program Specialist

Self - Regional Day School Program for the Deaf Program Specialist

San Antonio, TX

Any bill (HB 2) that includes public education finance needs to address the pay for K-12 interpreters. School districts have difficulty hiring and retaining qualified interpreters largely because of the pay discrepancy between K-12 as compared to other interpreting fields. Any bill addressing funding for public education needs to include specific set aside funds for educational interpreters to ensure fair access for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Districts are losing interpreters to community agencies which causes an extreme safety issue as well as educational problem for our DHH students because districts are unable to provide coverage for students and they are missing instruction or could find themselves in an emergency situation without a way to communicate or know what is happening around them.

Barbara Mutz

Self

Converse, TX

I currently work for an ISD in Texas and I see first hand the detriment to learning our students encounter with not having interpreters available. We have roughly 30 students in our public school and not enough support staff. We have one full time interpreter staffed through the district, all other interpreters are outsourced with agencies. Since most of our budget goes towards paying interpreters, we aren't able to fund more deaf support specialists, have adequate trainings, or have each student have an interpreter at all times available. We need students to have access from the time they arrive on campus until the time they leave, even if it includes after school activities.

Marcela Ybarra

Self-Deaf Support Specialist

San antonio, TX

I support this Bill.

Dee Carney

Texas School Alliance

Austin, TX

The Texas School Alliance (TSA) is providing written testimony IN SUPPORT of House Bill 2 on behalf of our 45 school district members. TSA appreciates the efforts to increase funding for ongoing school safety costs and strongly agrees that HB3 (88-R) underfunds all of the demands put on school districts in the bill. For example, HB 3 does not provide sufficient funding to fund the required security personnel at each campus. According to TEA data, the average salary for security staff in Texas schools is \$74,004.

We appreciate the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the TSA districts across the state to best serve their students and families.

The Texas School Alliance (TSA) comprises 45 of Texas' largest school districts, serving over 2.2 million students or nearly 41 percent of the state's total pupil enrollment. Our students represent 44 percent of the state's economically disadvantaged student population and 51 percent of its English Language Learners. The organization works on issues that will improve educational quality for Texas students, particularly those in large and urban districts.

For further information, please contact Mr. HD Chambers, Executive Director at hdchambersjr@gmail.com.

Richard Grill

Taxpayer, Grandparent of 5 public education students and a public school educator of 41 years

Bandera, TX

At a time when the State is flush with money, money that is available now but may not be in the future, the legislature should be funding priority legislation that may only require one-time funding with possible future upgrades. The decision to buy down M&O tax rates is much appreciated, but can it be sustained each biennium? I am asking you to ensure all schools have the physical means to accomplish the safety and security of students and staff. Since Robb, the State has mandated numerous school facility enhancements to help protect the schools and some funding has been provided, however there is much work still to do. Each school has its own unique needs, and having the funding and flexibility to secure their buildings must be a priority. Providing \$10 per ADA is insulting and speaks very poorly of the priorities of the State leadership. Furthermore, requiring an armed security person on each campus is great commitment however \$15,000 per campus to hire a TCOLE certified security person is plainly not enough. Considering the cost alone prompts more attention to funding, but the legislature must also understand that there is a shortage of law enforcement officers in Texas; I know this as my father and brother are officers in a major metropolitan police department. This shortage and gross underfunding is causing the majority of rural and small districts to arm their employees. School staff are not adequately trained to take on this role; and they never will be as this is not their primary function. You must also consider why there is a teacher shortage, it is because they are being asked to do more with less resources and public support; now asking them to be armed to protect themselves and their students. PLEASE consider this fact: How well is the State Capital secured? There are multiple well-armed DPS Troopers at each entrance and these Troopers are paid with the same tax dollars as schools. Why are the lives of the legislators and State Leadership more important than the children of this State?

Tereza M Talamantez, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please consider paying school district interpreters a comparable amount to agency interpreters. The demand is great and the need is dire! We cannot seem to keep interpreters due to the low wages.