

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 681

Compiled on: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 7:17 PM

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Hearing Date: March 28, 2023 8:00 AM

Rebecca Hamilton

Self

Smithville, TX

Please vote NO on TX HB 681

Shann Schubert, Ms.

Self, Instructional Coach

Sherman, TX

Education Committee, HB 2729 - This submission is late but I would like to add my voice to those of other concerned early childhood professionals who oppose the changing of certification standards for prekindergarten teachers in Highly Qualified Prekindergarten Programs. As a veteran teacher of multiple grades, I can tell you that the work demands in prekindergarten are no less stringent for teachers; that the developmental and content knowledge required to meet the educational needs of early learners do not fit in the same wheelhouse as elementary teaching requirements; and that the relationship partnership with families and their children are so significant and foundational for children's educational journey. It is my firm belief as someone who has been a child care center director, an ECI assistant program coordinator, a Head Start and a Prekindergarten teacher that lowering the educational requirements from certified teacher to a much less trained professional will have long term impacts on the students of Texas; their educational trajectory will not have the strong foundation that we have been building in early childhood programs for years now. Please do not support House Bill 2729.

Jamie Wilson, Dr

self, Superintendent of Schools

Denton, TX

On the bill, with the approval of locally elected trustees, LEAs should be able to offer virtual instruction to any student whose family makes that choice. The ISD should receive full ADA for the student participating in the virtual school program.

Donald Hamilton

Self

Smithville, TX

Please vote NO for HB 681

Carmen England
Self
The woodlands, TX

I support this bill. It is absolutely necessary.

Delaina Bishop
SELF/Parent
Austin, TX

I SUPPORT this bill.

Becky Calahan
Philanthropy Advocates
Austin, TX

Honorable Chair Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 681 by Representative Bell. Philanthropy Advocates, a collaboration with Educate Texas, is a funders collaborative of over 55 Texas foundations. Members of Philanthropy Advocates are funders in communities across Texas – in rural, urban and suburban regions where we are deeply invested in our education systems. Together we advocate for public and higher education policies so that all Texas students can achieve their educational goals from cradle to career.

Philanthropy Advocates knows Texas cannot reach the ambitious goals established by the state in Building a Talent Strong Texas without education systems – cradle to career – that equip students for lifelong academic and career success. Specifically, we believe Texas cannot maintain global competitiveness or advance economic mobility for Texas families if the Legislature does not double down on proven strategies to support a highly qualified teacher workforce.

Certification Should Be Rigorous to Support & Retain a Highly Qualified Teacher Workforce:

Teachers are the single-most important in-school factor for improving student academic performance. Educator preparation is extremely important to recruiting and retaining teachers so they can serve their important role for students. For the 2021-2022 school year, 20% of newly hired teachers held no teaching certificate. Research shows this lack of preparation correlates with high attrition rates, and many teachers exit the profession within their first 5 years of teaching.

HB 681 articulates the option of conducting observations of teacher candidates in a virtual format. As drafted, the bill would call for the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to provide options to continue flexibility afforded during the pandemic for educator preparation programs and calls for the SBEC to provide virtual options for educator preparation programs moving forward.

Teacher Vacancy Task Force Prioritizes High Quality Preparation:

Currently, teacher attrition rates are higher than they have been in the last decade. The Teacher Vacancy Task Force, established by Governor Abbott, produced recommendations to reduce the impact and frequency of losing teachers from our educator workforce. One main recommendation from this task force included a focus on quality preparation of novice educators.

We appreciate the committee's consideration on this legislation and your efforts to support Texas teachers.

Theresa Williams, Superintendent
Plano ISD
Plano, TX
Plano ISD supports

Jennifer Hanson
Lone Star Online Academy Roscoe ISD
Kingwood, TX

My name is Jennifer Hanson. I'm assistant principal for Lone Star Online Academy. I work on the primary campus. Our campus currently serves 4000 students from kindergarten to 2nd grade across the state. We opened in reaction to covid and currently run under SB 15. Our students and teachers love their school. Parents love knowing what is going in their students' classes daily. They love the flexibility.

My team's goal is to provide a premier and rigorous Kindergarten-2nd grade program that meets all the needs of each student and their families. Engagement of each student is one of our top priorities. We strive to use our abundant resources that are provided in the virtual classroom. Kindergarteners-2nd grade spend part of their morning in both whole and targeted live sessions according to each student's needs. These are all live. The teacher can see all my students and my students can see her. We design lessons based on the Texas TEKS and align with the Texas reading academy.

We use data to drive instruction based on Mclass data. When we started the year our students' scores were well off the mark. About 51% of the students in 1st grade, didn't know their letters or sounds at the beginning of the year. We are on track to have 75 % of our students on or above level according to mclass data. Our students can read , write and do math.

Bryce Adams, VP of Advocacy
Texas Public Charter Schools Association
Austin, TX

March 28, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Texas Public Charter Schools Association (TPCSA), we thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 681. We greatly appreciate Representative Bell bringing this bill forward for the Committee to discuss today.

TPCSA's mission is to support and advocate for a policy and regulatory climate that ensures every student in Texas has access to ever-improving public school options. For some students the best public school option is a fully-virtual or hybrid learning environment, and we support legislation that expands access to high-quality options that meet those needs.

Last session, SB 15 was passed to continue virtual options for students while the Texas Commission on Virtual Education discussed longer-term recommendations for the future of virtual education in Texas. HB 681 would ensure that the temporary SB 15 provisions do not expire, which is important in the absence of comprehensive legislation. There are still opportunities, however, to address some of the unforeseen issues of SB 15, including the unanimous recommendations of the bipartisan Commission.

We hope that the Committee will have a broader discussion today and in coming weeks about virtual education that is inclusive of considerations of the recommendations from the Texas Commission on Virtual Education's final report.

Again, we thank you for your consideration of our feedback and your service on this Committee to ensure high-quality public education is a reality for every Texan.

Sincerely,
Bryce Adams
Vice President of Advocacy
Texas Public Public Charter School Association

Amanda Erickson

self

Austin, TX

Please vote YES on this bill. This will help alleviate some of the teacher shortages that we are now seeing in our public schools.

Sara Ruffin

Self - teacher

Lago Vista, TX

As a Texan teacher, I am against this bill and the loosening of teacher certification requirements even for online courses. An internship is not sufficient. The standards of secondary education or comparable program safeguard our children's access to competent and well-prepared teachers. Our students deserve better.