

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 2

Compiled on: Thursday, March 6, 2025 5:10 PM

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: March 6, 2025 8:00 AM

Nancy J Rodriguez

Self

New Braunfels, TX

I do not support the use of public taxpayer dollars to fund private education AKA School Vouchers. Individuals CHOOSING private education for their children have the responsibility & FREEDOM TO CHOOSE to pay for their CHOICE THEMSELVES.

SAVE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS & USE MY TAX DOLLARS RESPONSIBLY BY VOTING NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS.

CHARLES LUKE

Coalition for Education Funding

WEATHERFORD, TX

Chairman Buckley and members of the House Public Education Committee,

My name is Charles Luke and I am writing on behalf of the Coalition for Education Funding, a group of over 80 school districts. We are testifying on HB2 with some concerns.

While we truly appreciate the increase in the Basic Allotment of \$220 per student in the bill, it will not be enough to address budgetary deficits in public school districts across the state.

Fund Schools First, an initiative by several North Texas school districts estimates that there would need to be an increase in the Basic Allotment of \$1340 per student to reach pre-pandemic buying power. Additionally, since the school finance legislation of 2019 (HB3) constant dollar funding for school districts has decreased by \$9.86 billion.

While we know that such an adjustment would be very expensive (nearly \$15 billion per biennium), the state passed an \$12.7 billion property tax relief bill (SB2) in 2023. It seems that it is a matter of political will rather than ability to fund.

Additionally, while traditional public schools will continue to struggle financially under HB2, charter schools receive even more funding under the bill. Charter schools receive an increase of \$289 per student in addition to the \$220 increase in the Basic Allotment.

HB 2 almost triples facility funding for charter schools – and broadens its use beyond “instructional facilities.”

- With the \$60 million cap removed, charter facility funding would increase from \$60 million to \$177.5 million in School Year 2025-26.

- The bill removes the restriction that these public funds be spent only on “instructional facilities.”

These are some of our concerns with HB2. We do appreciate the focus on Special Education in the bill, an item that has been woefully underfunded in recent years, and the focus on teacher pay and teacher prep programs.

Thank you for your time and service. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at charlesluke43@gmail.com or by phone at 940-768-8594.

Charles Luke, Ed.D.

Curstin Ploch

Self

Aubrey, TX

The Governor's Teacher Retention task force highlighted a need for increased pay. Teachers are part of the foundation of the Texas Miracle. I support increasing educator pay for teachers, nurses, counselors, librarians, and administrators. These salaries should be paid for by an allotment INCREASE. Things like TIA are not universally available, and in some cases, de-incentivize high performing teachers from sharing their techniques. When educators share their knowledge and expertise, all students win. Texas has the skilled workers it needs, so increase teacher pay to support rural and urban districts alike.

Rachel Mendrek, Ms.

Self / Teacher in AISD

Austin, TX

As a public school educator, I support the need for a \$1,300 per student increase that will get us back to 2019 levels and get Texas schools out of the budget crisis the legislature has created. The legislature is not in the classroom paying out of pocket expenses (on a teacher salary much less) to support instruction in the classroom. Trying to create materials, buy materials, and provide meaningful instruction is a daily struggle in the classroom. Why won't our legislature support the future of our students, rather than the future of their pockets? Knowing that our elected officials refuse to represent the majority of its constituents is unfathomable. Knowing our elected officials don't care about all children is offensive. Knowing our elected officials are so ignorant in their positions that they prefer to keep children from becoming their best, by way of public education, begs the question...what are our elected officials doing by supporting only the dictates of the wealthy in our state. This narrowminded thinking consistently prevents Texas from being a national leader in education. Our legislature is knowingly killing the public education system! I need financial support (\$1300 per student) to supply students with a quality education! Put children's education before your personal financial gains!

Rebecca Beck

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Education Committee,

I am a parent of two elementary students in Texas public schools. I also serve on our school's PTA board. I am very involved in the school and see the struggles that occur because of underfunding. I am writing to ask that the basic allotment be raised to keep up with inflation. The proposed increase is not enough. Even if it is raised by \$1,300 per student, Texas would still be in the bottom of per pupil funding in the nation.

I am also asking to switch to enrollment based funding instead of attendance. Funding by attendance can encourage parents to feel forced to send ill students to school to not lose out on funding. Just because a student misses the attendance snapshot day, does not mean the school should lose the money for that kid.

Please invest in our students. Texas deserves a well-educated population. Imagine what our kids can accomplish with more resources.

Sincerely,

Becca Beck

Amy Drake

Self - Public Education Teacher

Lubbock, TX

I am a 5th grade RLA teacher in Lubbock IDS. I am a National Board Certified Teacher. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation.

I have been teaching at the same school for 24 years and have been recognized as a Newton Excellence in Education Award winner and a leader in education in my district.

The National Board Certification process has made me look at my teaching in a way that made me consider why I make the teaching decisions I do. It helped me analyze the true needs of my students and meet those needs in ways that best benefited them. They received a more reflective teacher who always adjusted to what best suited their learning.

I began this process in order to gain the TIA designation. It made me a better teacher ten fold. The National Board Certification Process must be maintained every 5 years, making it a continual learning and self improving process. I believe that many teachers would benefit from this process, but there must be more than an intrinsic reward. The allotment funding must be maintained as a retention mechanism. There is a need to increase the allotment to retain excellent teachers in higher need schools (often where there is no other path to TIA due to districts not participating or positions not qualifying for TIA). The increased access to TIA when local designation systems are limited allows those teachers a pathway to earning this designation.

National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to a TIA recognized designation in HB2. It is the motivation teachers need to improve themselves and their students' performance.

Amy Drake

Self - Public Education Teacher

Lubbock, TX

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Carmen Bessire

Self - Public School Teacher

AUSTIN, TX

I am a teacher in a successful Texas public school, the same in which Governor Abbott signed his last education bill many years ago in 2019, and I am asking you to properly fund public education to keep our public schools doing the great work they are doing. Since 2019 when the Governor was at my school, there has not been an increase in the basic allotment, so we are using 2019 dollars for 2025 expenses that include record post-pandemic inflation. We as teachers are always tasked to do more with less. Why? Why does a great state like Texas force that upon its schools and students and rank so low in country-wide rankings of education? It doesn't have to, and shouldn't be that way. Reinstate funding to the basic allotment to allow public schools to be great without their hands tied behind their backs. The governor has led a smear campaign against public schools, but if you look at the majority, they are serving students well and are loved by their communities. Parents have school choice within public schools because most offer transfers to other campuses as well as out-of-district transfers. At my own school, we have multiple families who are no longer zoned to our school and could go to the school closest to them, but they opt to stay with us because they know we do good work to teach and care for their children. We could make every school like mine if we properly fund them and raise teacher salaries to retain and attract good teachers. For this reason, I ask you to raise the basic allotment to \$1300 to keep up with the inflated costs we currently face, and which the current \$220 will not help. There are plenty of funds in the state's surplus to do so, and it will be a great investment in future Texan workers who come from great Texas public schools. I ask you to also let the funds be used without restrictions so that each school can use the funds as their needs demand. As a teacher with 15 years of experience, I know that one-size-fits-all does not work for teaching students, and it also does not work for funding schools. Let the experts in those schools determine where best to use their funds, be it on interventions to help students catch up, innovative newcomer programs to help students new-to-the-country, or instructional coaches to support new teachers to ensure they are successful. The federal government is not doing us any favors by potentially cutting Title I funds that would also support these needs, so we need our Texas legislature to step up and serve their constituents, their students and their communities as a whole by making Texas public schools great. A Texas public school education worked for me and so many others around us - let's continue that great work.

Nydia Alvarez-Alonzo

Mission Classroom Teachers Association

Mission, TX

I am writing to urge you to prioritize funding for Texas public schools. Our students deserve access to the resources, teachers, and programs necessary to achieve their full potential. As you know, education is a fundamental pillar of our society and economy, yet many schools across the state are struggling with inadequate funding.

With the right resources, we can provide our children with the tools they need to succeed. This includes up-to-date textbooks, access to technology, well-trained teachers, and support services like counseling. Many schools, particularly those in underfunded districts, are unable to provide these vital resources, which can have lasting effects on student outcomes and the future of our state.

As our representatives, it is your responsibility to ensure that every child in Texas has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or zip code. I respectfully ask that you advocate for increased funding for education so that all Texas students receive a quality education that prepares them for success in college, careers, and life.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Greg Fore

Self

Terrell, TX

I have been a republican teacher and have heard promises of raises for Texas Teachers. Most rural teachers with degrees can make more money working at a gas station or grocery store. We need to value education in Texas by allowing us to move the needle and make Texas Great Again!

Monica Sneller

Self- parent of SPED child in Katy ISD

Houston, TX

Close the spending gap for special education. There shouldn't be a penalty for local districts to educate their students who have special needs and learning disabilities. The disbursement for all children should be equal.

Sylvia Coulson

self- Dietitian

Waxahachie, TX

I DO NOT support this bill. HB 2 largely reinforces the existing government-run school monopoly. Instead of requiring public schools to operate more efficiently with their current resources, the bill pours more taxpayer money into a system that has failed to produce meaningful student performance gains. Worse, HB 2 undermines the effectiveness of HB 3's school choice initiative by solidifying the dominance of government-run education. NO MORE POWER TO THE GOVERNMENT.

April Smith

Self - Educator for 21 years

San Angelo, TX

First off, I want to thank you for your service in the Texas House of Representatives. I will not personally address vouchers because even though I oppose them, I assume they will pass this year due to Governor Abbott's push for this legislation. Instead, I would like to discuss educator pay. I'm not for sure how many people realize that teacher's salaries max out at 20 years even though we are expected to teach for over 30 years for full retirement. Some districts pay out of their own pockets to give their educators after 20 years of service an extra little bit, even if it's just \$500 extra a year. I teach in the Wall School District, which like many rural schools, does not do this due to lack of funding. We get the state base without any extra stipends. This past year, I received the last pay raise that I will ever see unless the state raises educator pay. However, that will then be the last raise until the next time teacher salaries are brought up again in several years. I do not understand why the pay tops out at 20 years if we are expected to teach 30+ years. No other job to my knowledge does this to their employees. Please consider changing this while the teacher salaries are being discussed. As an educator with a masters in chemistry who makes \$54,000 after being in education for over 20 years and has not been eligible to even begin the TIA process as our school was not able to start until this year due to the staggering of school districts, it is very disheartening to know that I will not ever receive an increase in salary even if I teach another 14 years until my youngest graduates. Not only does this affect my family on a yearly basis, but by future retirement as it is based on the top five highest paid years. Without a raise after year 20, retirement may be out of the question even after he graduates. I comes from a long line of educators. My educator parents, aunts, grandparents, and great-grandmother all worked as educators and touted how even if the salary wasn't fantastic, teaching was a rewarding job that paid decent and gave you the benefit of a good retirement. Unfortunately, without pay raises after year 20, that may not be the case anymore and one more reason on why we have a teacher shortage as many fabulous educators have left the profession to get higher salaries and better retirement. I do not want to sound ungrateful because I really appreciate the possibility of increasing salaries, however I would really appreciate you looking into the possibility of providing raises after 20 years too. Thank you again for your service to the state of Texas.

Diana castro

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SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am for public education in Texas. Let's work on funding schools that educate over 5 million students in Texas. Schools vouchers will spend 1 billion and benefit only 2% of students. Support our public schools and vote no to school vouchers.

Nicole Stone
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicole Stone, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gabriel Sanchez

Self

Houston, TX

Funding

Cassi Sultemeier

Self - teacher and parent

Cottonwood Shores, TX

I would like to see the basic allotment per student higher. Our schools are struggling. Many districts in our area attempted VATE for tax relief. Ours failed, we have a lower income and retirement community. I want my child's school and the school I work at to be fully funded. \$6000 raised to \$8000 to match inflation. TIA is hard (taking years to go through the process) and not all teachers (especially at secondary) can qualify. Put move money toward districts. Thank you for the general salary funding in this bill. Personally, inflation is killing my family and I've been a Texas teacher for 15 years. But my family of 4 is struggling. I've seen two of my teacher friends leave the profession this year simply for higher paying no teaching jobs. It's a calling, but so is feeding our families. My district is working towards TIA and I will likely qualify but won't see any money for another year and a half. It's been a long year of pinching pennys. So just a reminder that TIA isn't the best or quickest fix. Fund general raises for all staff to meet inflation.... Quickly please.

Jo Ann Connally

Self (sales manager)

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

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3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating

Jeromie Brown

self

Terrell, TX

I keep hearing a lot about teacher pay raises, but what about the pay and support for maintenance and custodial staff? Our health insurance premiums go up almost every year, often wiping out any raises we receive. Are there any discussions or plans to address both wages and health insurance for staff like us?

Laura Hess, Dr.

Self/High School Teacher

San Antonio, TX

I would like to advocate for:

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000

Joanna Graham
Self / Sr Director HR
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sharon A Spears, Mrs.

Self
Lumberton, TX

As a retired educator of Texas with over 40 years of full and part-time teaching, public education is for all the students of Texas. There IS a choice for parents, all parents in the state of Texas and has been for my entire life. Don't confuse the residents of this great state and fund public schools as they should be.

Hao Wei
Self
Coppell, TX

I appreciate the legislature's efforts to support public education through targeted programs such as the Teacher Incentive Allotment and the Fine Arts Allotment. Rewarding teacher excellence and investing in the arts are critical steps toward improving student outcomes, and these provisions are well-structured to provide direct benefits to educators and students. However, I am deeply concerned about the overall financial impact of this bill on school districts like mine. While the bill imposes several new requirements, many of these do not come with a corresponding increase in funding. The very modest increase to the basic allotment is nowhere near enough to keep pace with inflation, rising operational costs, and the financial strain districts are already facing.

My school district is running a \$7 million deficit this year and is projected to go bankrupt by 2028 if no substantial changes are made to school funding. Without significant increases to the basic allotment, districts will be forced to make difficult cuts, potentially undermining the very goals this bill seeks to achieve. The state must prioritize sustainable funding to ensure that Texas public school students can receive a high-quality education, regardless of future inflation.

I urge lawmakers to address this gap by increasing the basic allotment to a level that reflects actual costs and inflationary pressures. Without this adjustment, well-intentioned reforms will be overshadowed by a financial crisis in districts across the state.

Gennie Westbrook
self
Cooper, TX

Recommendations: Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.
Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.
Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.
Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size allotment and Basic Allotment. I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. Please raise that threshold to at least 40%.

Frances Gallardo
Futuro San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

My name is Frances Gallardo and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Kathy Meier Pennuell
Self, retired
New Caney, TX

I am against vouchers and so-called school choice. Vote against these bills.

Sheila Shrode

self- Senior Manager Operations Accounting

Klein, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley,

My name is Sheila Shrode, and I have children in Texas Public Schools in Klein ISD. I have been involved in my children's education and volunteering at the school for years and see how important our local schools are for the well-being of my community.

I've been reading the local news and talking with teachers and parents about all of the cuts that Klein ISD will have to make because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Klein ISD currently has a budget shortfall of \$32.8 million. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. There would still be enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools which provide education to all students regardless of income or disability. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Sincerely,
Sheila Shrode

Daniel Johnson, EMS Chief / school board president

Self

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Daniel Johnson, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner, small business owner, school board member. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Lori Rapp, Dr.
Lewisville ISD
Lewisville, TX

Consider that Basic Allotment increases must be viewed differently for districts with declining enrollment from year to year. There are over half of the districts in Texas (approximately 500) that are experiencing enrollment declines. HB 2 currently includes an increase to the basic allotment of \$220 from \$6,160 per student to \$6,380. Declining enrollment districts are losing revenue each year which means the projected loss in revenue must be subtracted from the projected increase from the Basic Allotment. Lewisville ISD is projecting a decrease of 1,473 students for the 2025-26 school year from our snapshot enrollment in 2024-25. This loss of 1,473 students at our average funding of \$9,829 per student would be a reduction in funding of \$14.5 million from FY 25 to FY 26. While a \$220 increase to the basic allotment would generate \$13 million for the 2025-26 school year once you subtract \$14.5M our district would actually realize \$1.5M less in funding and would not be able to meet the proposed 40% required spend on salary increases. It is important to note, that while we have referenced above a \$9,829 average per student that Lewisville ISD received for 2023-24 school year, we are referencing this average since TEA uses averages to try and indicate there is more funding per student than the basic allotment. The misleading aspect of using averages is that this assumes the per student average amount can be used to educate all of our more than 47,000 students. The amount of money per student received for special education and CTE is much higher than the basic allotment so when you average all of these allotments together it inflates what it looks like districts have available to spend on all students. For example, the district received \$12,506 per student to educate our special education students and \$14,428 per student for CTE students. These funds cannot be spent on every child in the school district but when calculated as part of an average it makes it appear as though they can be spent on every child and that districts are receiving more than the Basic Allotment for every student. The current specialized allotments due not fully fund costs the district is facing for students. Lewisville ISD special education allotment provided \$70.1 million for 2023-24. However the district spent \$76.2 million, or \$6.1 million more than the state provided on Special Education services. For 2023-24, we also spent \$2.9 million more than the state allotment for Early Education as the district is required to provide full day pre-K but only receives half funding for those students. Finally, the district spent \$11.6 million more than the Transportation Allotment. HB 2 includes an increase to the Transportation Allotment for special education but that will only generate an estimated increase of \$56,864 for Lewisville ISD.

Tami Keeling
Myself
VICTORIA, TX

Chairman Buckley and Committee Members,
I'm Tami Keeling. As a former school board trustee of 18 years, I've seen years of funding formulas. I've lived through the cuts of 2008, unfunded mandates, failure to provide inflation adjustments to the Basic Allotment in 2019, and other funding challenges. The proposed \$220 increase to Basic Allotment when \$1,340 is needed just to break even is not prudent. I watched a parade of invited testimonials that apparently, didn't have the courage to tell you how dire your failure to restore funding is to their district. I know that sounds harsh, and perhaps ungrateful. However, the truth is that districts are facing program cuts, further deferred maintenance, campus closures, and deficits. This cannot continue. Representative Hinojosa said that if districts didn't advocate for what they need, school closures will be "on them". I would add to that be saying that you know well what is needed to restore districts to at least 2019 funding levels. Failure to fund our public schools resulting in further cuts to programs, school closures, and deficits are now on you. I ask that you do your Constitutional duty and provide for our public schools. The FIRST report and Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports required by this body are sufficient to ensure that all funds are spent appropriately. Thank you for your belief in our public schools, trustees, administrators, teachers, and most importantly our children. We do and will make the best use of all funds available.
If you have questions, I can be reached at tami.keeling@hotmail.com or 361-935-5142.

Sincerely,

Tami Keeling
Former Trustee Victoria ISD

Deanne Vance

Self/ Retired Republican against Vouchers

Wimberley, TX

As a Republican and Christian my entire life, I strongly object to vouchers, ESAs, the Bluebonnets curriculum, or any other legislation that does not maintain the separation of church and state our founding fathers recognized. This bill creates another level of bureaucracy to administer such plans, does not require private schools, whether religious or not, to abide by the same rules as public schools. Furthermore, it discriminates against rural and mid-sized areas that have little if any access to private schools. I respectfully ask that this issue be put to a vote for the entire state. You and I both know that the issue would be soundly defeated because Texans don't want to do even more harm to the public education than has been done since the Republican Party under Abbott and Patrick took over. Put the dollars into teacher salaries, expanded career and technology programs statewide, fully funded state mandates, and see what happens. And get rid of Pearson. There are better assessments available that both public and private schools should be used to compare student progress.

Aubrey Stock

SELF- Lovejoy ISD Parent

Lucas, TX

My name is Aubrey Stock and I am a mother of five young children in Lovejoy ISD. For nearly two years, I have been advocating for increased public school funding, meeting with legislators, attending hearings virtually, and working alongside parents and educators across Texas.

The \$220 increase in the basic allotment proposed in HB 2 is completely inadequate and feels like a personal slap in the face to every parent, teacher, and school leader who has been raising the alarm about school funding. The basic allotment is the foundation of school funding in Texas, affecting teacher salaries, classroom resources, and student programs. Yet, despite rising costs, the state has not meaningfully increased it since 2019.

Texas has a surplus in the billions, yet HB 2 only raises the basic allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,380—schools are receiving less funding per student in real dollars than they were in 2019. To simply keep up with inflation, we need at least a \$1,300 increase in the basic allotment. Without it, districts will be forced to cut programs, increase class sizes, and struggle to pay teachers competitively.

HB 2 also sets aside funding for teacher raises, but without a meaningful increase in the basic allotment, these raises are not sustainable. Districts are already struggling to keep up with rising costs, and any additional salary funding that is not built into the basic allotment means schools will have to cut elsewhere to make it work. If we truly value our teachers, we must provide permanent, long-term funding solutions, not short-term fixes that leave districts scrambling.

Texas schools are at a breaking point. We need a meaningful increase in the basic allotment and sustainable teacher salary funding. The future of Texas depends on the strength of our public schools, and right now, we are failing to provide them with the resources they need.

Our children deserve better. Please take real action to fully fund Texas public schools.

Maria del Carmen Needham, Constituent

Constituent

georgetown, TX

Dear Committee, I am a parent and a public school psychologist. The simple fact is that Texas schools, including the schools in my beloved Georgetown ISD, are being strangled. Our teachers provide a life-giving service to our community by educating the upcoming generations who will be the infrastructure of our future local and state economies. Our state legislature has not addressed funding for public schools since 2019, yet inflation has significantly increased. This static budget means that schools have reduced access to vital resources in providing an exceptional standard of care. By definition, this is strangulation.

Public schools have been neglected and our workforce is being asked to do more with less. This leads to burnout and losing incredible educators in our communities.

The \$220 being proposed does not even account for inflation. Our schools need at least \$1340 per student to catch up with inflation, but even then it does not address the additional needs we have.

We ask that you consider amending the budget increase to at least \$1340 so our school districts can provide the tools and resources necessary to properly fund our public schools.

Our public schools are the heartbeat of our community. Please vote for the children of Texas and the future of Texas. Vote no to HB 3 and increase the basic allotment to at least \$1340 on HB 2.

Respectfully,

A concerned citizen, Carmen Needham

Sylvia Snyder Poynter

Self

CONVERSE, TX

Do your job to protect and invest in all our children not just those of the wealthy

Brad Yurcho, Board Member

Henrietta ISD

Henrietta, TX

I appreciate the efforts being given toward helping our school districts and kids. I serve as School Board President for Henrietta ISD, Enrollment 870. I will keep this brief.

Basic Allotment: This number needs to start cutting into the inflation deficit, I believe that number is around \$1100 per kid. If the increase could be around \$500 this session, 2027 and 2029 you would almost catch up.

Rural Schools Allotment: TARS is asking for 0.00065, this would help level the playing field with regards to our teacher pay, Increasing the allotment allows us to compensate our strong teachers and keep them in our school district long term.

Property valuation study: Our district is losing around \$500k of funding per year due to the difference in the Appraisal district values and the state values. We would support the bill that would eliminate this penalty. We have very little control over the valuations and our kids have no control over it. The increase in allotments and elimination of the property valuation study penalty would mean an increase of \$2,000,000 to our district.

Thank you again for your time and support of small districts across Texas.

Emily Dial

Self/Engineer

Fort Worth, TX

All of this money going to charter schools is incredibly wasteful and just lines the pockets of the rich while robbing the poor of a good education.

Faye Holland
myself
Austin, TX

Please fund our Texas Schools. Funding them is what is best for all of Texas so we can have an educated work force. Increase the basic allotment to reach the value of your proposed vouchers. You can do it help families help Texans. Public Schools can be a great equalizer they admit anyone unlike Private Schools. We need your help to uphold the Texas Constitution and keep church and state separate.

Gabriela Hawthorne
Self
Northlake, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. Families with special needs children don't have the luxury to choose other schools, so we must ensure our public schools are adequately funded to provide the services and accommodations the kids deserve!

Carolyn Chapman
Self/Parent of dyslexic students in public school
Dallas, TX

Thank you for your time to support public schools in Texas. Under the current Special Education funding, schools aren't being set up to have enough funding to provide for students with disabilities who attend them. Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education.

Insufficient funds for staff, training and dyslexia remediation programs has caused students to be missed for identification and to have inadequate interventions. I see it with my own children and countless other students as parents begin to ask questions and seek help. Even though we have worked with advocates to help our students receive the reading intervention they need, the school is limited by its staff and the staff's training. The student IEPs are not well written and can't be well implemented with the current funding.

Thank you for helping create a better plan for Special Education funding in Texas.

Kirsten Schneider, Educational Diagnostician
Natalia ISD
Devine, TX

Please increase our funding! We are drowning!

Debi Buchanan, Dr.
Self
Heath, TX

As the former special education director for two school districts in Texas over 20 years, one of the greatest struggles was hiring enough qualified people to provide the federally mandated services owed to students as dictated by their IEPs. I continually saw school districts struggle with providing enough money to adequately support the students in special education. School districts have not received an increase in funding since 2019. This proposed bill does not adequately provide funds for school districts who are just trying to catch up with inflation. Denying them the proper funding sets them up to eventually fail to provide the federally mandated services and thereby put them at risk for due process and OCR complaints which further reduces funding for students. Please do not pass this proposed bill as it is currently written.

James Villegas

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

More money needs to be added to the basic allotment. An additional \$220 is not enough. Please do NOT allocate more money for charter facilities.

Heather Bland-Ho

self

Austin, TX

Dear Public Education Committee Members,

If Texas does not have enough money to fully fund our public schools and return them to 2019 funding levels, it is evident to me (and should be to you, as custodians of our budget) that our state certainly does not have enough money to create a new voucher program.

Our hardworking Texas schools have been starved of an increase to the Basic Allotment for 6 long years- districts and school boards have made cut after cut- and now they are down to the bone. According to TASBO (Texas Association of School Business Officials), 80% of the districts they surveyed are severely underfunded, with half of those districts being forced to file deficit budgets in 2024 (up from one-third in 2023, showing a worsening situation.) This has caused neighborhood school closures; the elimination of beloved special programs such as IB or Spanish Immersion; a reduction of teachers, which means increased class sizes and impacts to student learning. Some districts have even gone to 4-day weeks in a desperate attempt to cut costs, leaving working families without the care their child needs during the day.

These actions are not a result of mis-management, but instead the result of the perfect storm of historic inflation, unfunded legislative mandates, increasing needs for special education students, and the deliberate withholding of an increase in the Basic Allotment until Gov Abbott gets his vouchers. But that's not fair to our students and their dedicated teachers.

Our neighborhood schools are important to us Texans; they are the lifeblood of our communities and they deserve FULL FUNDING to provide excellent service and help every child reach their full potential. Our wonderful local schools DO provide choice... if they are funded correctly.

\$220 will absolutely not cut it- by many calculations (Raise Your Hand Texas and others), the Basic Allotment needs an extra \$1350 just to return to pre-pandemic levels of service. In addition, the Basic Allotment should be tied to an inflation index so that it can never be used as a political football again; and it should be enrollment-based, instead of attendance-based.

If you are telling us that the state cannot afford to raise the Basic Allotment by the necessary \$1350, then immediately and forever take the Billion Dollar Voucher Scam off the table. Hardworking Texas taxpayers understand that if you can't afford it, you can't afford it, right? Put the expensive, unwanted item back on the shelf and focus on the basics...

***FULLY FUNDING OUR GREAT TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS with a \$1350 increase to the Basic Allotment, tying the Allotment to an inflation index and basing it on enrollment instead of attendance. Thank you.

Leyla Shams

self

Austin, TX

I am against this voucher SCAM. The public schools are failing because the governor has allowed them to fail. I grew up in Texas with a thriving public school system, and now our schools are closing, underfunded, and this will further gut our schools. Please do not pass this horrendous bill. Please please please stand up for our children, and invest in our public schools. Please stop fighting the wrong fights. Please stop giving welfare for the rich. Please don't give government handouts to the rich!

Patricia Lee, Mes.

Self

Austin, TX

I am a retired teacher and school administrator with three grandchildren in Leander ISD. I think it's terrible that Texas has not increased funding per student to school since 2019 and has let the state fall to nearly the bottom of the ranks among the 50 states. How can a state that prides itself on being the best let something as important as education fall so far behind. Today's school children are the future of our state and our country. To make up for budget short falls next year. My grandkids high school is getting rid of important programs like international baccalaureate (IB) and cutting 13 teachers, including my granddaughter's chemistry teacher. We are jeopardizing our own future by under funding our schools. Businesses will not keep moving here if we can't provide a well educated base of workers.

Please increase funding to our schools, vote down the unfair, voucher bill, and help our schools catch up from past deficits by approving a bail out in the form of extra funds from the unspent \$50 billion rainy day fund. What could be more important than our kids and our future?

Holly Bryant

Self

Austin, TX

advocating for more \$ for public education. raising the basic allotment by \$1340 to return to pre pandemic levels

Tiffany Matthews

self

Austin, TX

At a minimum, the basic allotment for student should be \$7,500 to keep up with inflation.

Keisha Barnes
Westchester Academy for International PTA
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The current allocations are not enough.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thomas Watson
Self
Granbury, TX

I believe HB 2 should be passed for Public School Teachers.

Danielle Minnis, Teacher

self

San Antonio, TX

Concerning the Bill 26 which would remove Nationally Board Certified Teachers from TIA and deny them their stipends under the Recognized designation. Nationally Certification is the best training I ever received as an educator. I now mentor and run a program for my district, I brought it from Kentucky. It's important a state recognizes teachers hard work and commitment to the profession, because so few do. Children need a

Qualified, consistent teachers that are not worrying about making ends meet because their salary is so low. Texas is in the bottom of states for teacher pay and training, few people want to be a part of that. Please consider keeping Nationally Certified teachers in TIA. Thank you

Debbie Tropiano

self / retired

CEDAR PARK, TX

Public schools have been vastly underfunded for years and vouchers will make it worse! Texas needs a strong public education system, especially in the rural areas and for both low income and special education students. These students will have great difficulties making use of any vouchers, thus rely on the local public schools for an appropriate education to help them become successful taxpaying adults. I strongly oppose HB2!

Matt Maudlin

Self

Spring, TX

As a parent of 2 public school children, HB2 has some shortfalls that will continue to impact UNDERFUNDED public schools. One aspect of the bill is regarding funding based on attendance, when funding should be based on student enrollment. Several factors affect funding when based on daily attendance. When students are absent, schools still have fixed costs, regardless if a child is absent from school. Secondly, special ed students tend to have higher rates of absences due to extended resources that they need. (Therapies, doctor appointments, evaluations, and more) Another glaring issue in HB2's funding deals with the MINIMAL increase in the basic allotment per student. The proposed increase in no way provides schools, and districts, meaningful monetary increases that help to offset inflation, and future occurring costs. As everyone is aware, the basic allotment has not increased since 2019. It is time for the TX Legislature to pass a bill that has a meaningful impact on the students educational setting.

Renee Smith-Faulkner

Castleberry ISD

Aledo, TX

Public Comment on HB2 ADSY – Castleberry ISD

Castleberry ISD has successfully implemented the Additional Days School Year (ADSY) calendar for four years, with all students, K-12, following a 180-day instructional calendar plus an additional 30 ADSY days. This model has contributed to student growth and was recognized in the Texas Education Agency's Annual Report.

Currently, ADSY funding is limited to elementary students, despite the demonstrated benefits for all grade levels. To ensure the long-term sustainability of this program, we respectfully request the following adjustments:

1. Expand ADSY funding to include middle school students to provide equitable learning opportunities across grade levels.
2. Modify the instructional calendar to 175 days plus the additional 30 ADSY days, allowing five days for professional learning and student-led conferences.
3. Increase ADSY funding from 0.50 to 0.75 per ADA to cover essential costs, including teacher compensation, utilities, transportation, and student support services such as nurses, counselors, and social workers.

These changes are critical to sustaining the ADSY model beyond the initial implementation funding, ensuring continued success for our students and educators.

Karen Miller, Ms

Self/Retired Clinical Social Worker Department of Defense

Austin, TX

I support an increase in education funding for every student. There is no reason that Texas should have anything but the best schools!

Pamela Ferworn, Mrs.

Self - Mom / Speech-Language Pathologist / Artist / Volunteer / Mentor / Wife

Houston, TX

Good evening Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Pam Ferworn and I am a parent, volunteer and community member in Spring Branch ISD (SBISD) in Houston. I am taking time from my evening to write to you all tonight to urge you to support legislation that will close the gaps in funding education programs that serve our students.

SBISD has been transparent in its funding issues. And the data that has presented highlights that our schools are **SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERFUNDED** in key mandated areas. Which forces them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing significant funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example (from 2023-2024):

- Safety & Security - Funded \$0.9 million - Actual cost to SBISD \$8.9 million - **SHORTFALL** of \$8 million

- Special Education - Funded \$31.5 million - Actual cost to SBISD \$53.5 million - **SHORTFALL** of \$22 million

- Transportation - Funded \$1.5 million - Actual cost to SBISD \$10.4 million - **SHORTFALL** of \$8.9 million

- PreKindergarten - Funded \$0.5 million - Actual cost of SBISD \$3.7 million - **SHORTFALL** of \$3.2 million.

We have the best teachers, staff and administration in SBISD. They are doing the best they can with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We pay taxes for public schools to fund public schools. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the **ACTUAL COSTS** of running these programs. This includes:

1. **ADJUST THE BASIC ALLOTMENT TO ACCOUNT FOR INFLATION**

2. **INCREASE THE BASIC ALLOTMENT** by **AT LEAST \$500** - but it would be preferred at \$1000

3. **FULLY FUND SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES** - if you mandate them, then the state should pay for them.

4. **FULLY FUND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES** - to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

5. **EXPAND THE FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION** - every student should have safe and reliable access to school

6. **BOOST INVESTMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** - full day pre-kindergarten sets children up for academic success.

In closing, I'd like to encourage you to close the funding gaps that are clearly present. Our children deserve better and Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pam Ferworn

James BOURQUE

Bourque Law Firm

Cedar Park, TX

Why is that Conservatives refuse to fund Public Education? Do you hate a well educated public? Is it a desire to segregate children from a cultural education? Or is it the desire to underfund it si that you can say it doesn't work? I truly do not know or understand Texas Conservative's opinion on this matter. Could you please provide me with an answer. However, this is your opportunity to bring funding back to 2019 levels, which by the way, are some of the lowest level per student in the United States. Thank you

Yvette Cantu, Dr.

Self-Educator

La Feria, TX

You all have all the data showing the rapid decline in the teacher workforce and the strain that puts in educating our 5.5 million public school students. If u truly want the best education system then you need to provide the funds to be able to attract and recruit a workforce with a minimum starting pay of \$62,000 and move the insurance and retirement plans and benefits to that of state employees. Teachers are the number one influence of student achievement, it is time to show them the respect and dignity they deserve! Our students depend on highly qualified educators in every classroom.

Stacy Harrington
self, Mom and homemaker
Austin, TX

I am the mother of three kids born and raised in Texas.

When the Texas Legislature does not keep funding for students current with inflation, it hurts our schools and our kids. It means classroom ratios rise, teachers loose their jobs, important programs that help prepare our future Texans for careers get cut.

My children attend schools in Leander ISD. For the past six years, our school district has been struggling and using up rainy day funds for shortfalls. But, we were recently notified that next year LISD will be getting rid of important programs like International Baccalaureate (IB) and cutting over 200 teachers.

Our schools are lacking and lagging behind at least 43 other states. We need ALL of our kids to be educated in order for Texas to have a thriving future. We need to provide a well-educated base of workers if we want to continue to draw lucrative business to relocate here.

Texas public schools can not provide quality education without more funds.

Please approve funds from the \$50 billion rainy day fund to help our schools catch up from future shortfalls.

Please increase funding to our schools for the future in the form of per capita increases that track with inflation.

Please vote down the unfair voucher bill that only helps wealthy families (within 500% of the poverty line) and businessmen from outside our state.

And, as a parent of a child with dyslexia, please protect 504 Plans for the kids who really need them.

What could be more important than our kids and preparing all of them to be the future of our state.

Thank you for your hard work towards making our state great, and for your time in considering this important matter.

Gaylann Speegle
PAISD
Port aransas, TX

My name is Gaylann Speegle. I live in Port Aransas, and I am a PAISD employee, parent, taxpayer, and voter. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Lee Livingston
self - Sr Director Procurement
Austin, TX

This bill doesn't provide nearly enough funding to support public schools. I moved my family to Austin from Oregon in part due to the quality of the public school system here. I'm disappointed to see our state leadership not maintaining or even building upon this standard.

Sarah Daly
Self
AUSTIN, TX

Public school has a significant impact on the lives of so many families and taking away the opportunity to have funds going into the schools within the community would be a tragic failure. As a product of public schools, I know the impact quality public schools can make and the essential function of public funding on schools and educational quality provided to our children. This is why I am opposed to the introduction of education savings accounts (ESA) in Texas and implore the House to vote against any such proposal currently under consideration.

Growing up, my parents taught us the value of a quality public education. They showed us the value of giving back to our community. My mom was a public school teacher for over 35 years who poured her soul into her work. As a child, I saw the sacrifices she made to help her students to learn, feel safe, and make memories. Many former students come back years later to remind her of these moments when she was teaching their kids. Often, she took her own money to help provide students with supplies they didn't have or even clothes when maybe their jeans were full of holes. My father also worked for the public schools as the Director of Food Service and worked sometimes 14 hour days to ensure all the children were fed good nutritional meals. He worked weekends to ensure refrigerators and walk-in freezers stay online and food was safe to eat when the kids came to school. When the schools struggled to pay them or the school lacked things they needed, my parents did all they could to make things better, even when the state funding was light. So you could say, public education was very important to our family as it put food on our table and my parents worked during their careers to make an impact on generations of students.

Based on my parents' example, it was paramount that when I had children that they receive the best possible education. That's why we moved from our home state of Missouri to put our children in Texas public schools; schools known as top-notch nationwide. And now, the sacrifices our family has made (leaving our home state, moving away from family and friends, and leaving secure jobs to find new ones) seem to be all for naught with the proposed education savings accounts. We can do better. So, I urge you to vote against HB3 and any other proposal that introduces education savings accounts in Texas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Daly
Concerned Texas Citizen

Caroline Saucedo, Mrs.
Self/teacher
San Antonio, TX

Please fund public schools. Do not put our public tax dollars into vouchers. Vouchers will ruin public education. I oppose this bill. We need to do what's best for all students! Please remember who you work for, the people, not Greg Abbott.

Thomas Marsden
Self
Austin, TX

Please allocate at least \$1000 more per student. \$220 is ridiculous and is about 1/8th of the amount necessary to simply keep up with inflation.

Debbie Baker
Retired Teacher
Rowlett, TX

To whom it may concern:

My thoughts and feelings about funding public schools:

I was a public school teacher for 33 years, my grandmother was a public school teacher and my son is a teacher at Austin HS in Austin. My two sons attended public school, one has a Ph.D in mechanical engineering. Public schools have served our family well. My husband and I recently attended an organized rally in Austin about providing adequate funding to public schools, something that I never dreamed would be necessary. I learned that since 2019 the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019.

Texas ranks 41st in the nation for funding per student and in my mind that is shameful.

The federal funds from Covid are long gone

and the way the federal government seems to headed right now it doesn't look great for public education funding.

I've read that the state of Texas has funding in the "Rainy Day Fund" and unspent funds from past years.

Please do the right thing and increase the funding to at least \$1,300 per student.

Red and yellow, black and white all students deserve the investment for an equality in education.

We need great schools so please help fix this now.

Sincerely,

Debbie Baker

Lynse L Pawelek
SPED students in Texas
Pleasanton, TX

Please consider closing the 1.7 billion gap in SPED funding in Texas and do what's right for students with disabilities in our state. With the addition of dyslexia in recent years, the SPED intervention programs have been impacted greatly.

Lynse L Pawelek
TCASE
Pleasanton, TX

Please consider

Lorie Barnett
Retired teacher, business owner
Paige, TX

Please fully fund our public schools & give all employees in education a substantial raise. Absolutely no to vouchers. Give the \$10,000/student in public schools. School districts are financially hurting & having to cut programs & teachers!!

Rosalie Johnson
Self
Port Aransas, TX

My name is Rosalie Johnson, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner, and a PAISD employee I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Paige Heitzman

Self

Cypress, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers. Please fully fund public education in our state.

Rachel Currier

Self

Austin, TX

Public funding should stay in public schools. The only sector a voucher system would benefit are kids who can already afford private schooling, to the detriment of all of other children attending public schools. There is no reason why Texas should be lagging in the education our children. Feeding public school funding into private schools who are not obligated to accept all children would only benefit a small and wealthy percent of the population who can afford choice anyway. HB2 is unacceptable, and not in the best interest of Texas children at large. Increase and keep public funding in public schools where it belongs.

Laura Peterek

Myself

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Laura Peterek. I live in Port Aransas and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner, parent, and PAISD employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Stephen Cryan

self; home builder, rancher

Sealy, TX

I STRONGLY OPPOSE THIS BILL.

sara stevenson

Self

Austin, TX

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Sara Stevenson

910 Blanco

Austin, Texas. 78703

512-923-1011

sarastevenson910@gmail.com

Testimony to the House Public Education Committee

I'm Sara Stevenson, a former school librarian in Austin. I'd like to speak about the per pupil allotment. Last session I knocked on many doors here with Just Fund it Texas, advocating to raise the per pupil allotment, which was stuck at 2019 levels. Despite our efforts, the figure, \$6,160 hasn't budged in six years.

In the meantime, inflation is up 24%, so \$6,160 would need to be increased to \$7,630 just to retain its previous purchasing power. Your proposal of adding only \$220 to the allotment is rather pitiful. Just as eggs are more expensive, so is education.

Our schools are suffering. Over 60% of all Texas school districts are projecting a budget deficit for the coming school year.

Deficit spending for a school district translates into over-crowded classrooms, extra classes for secondary teachers, and loss of planning periods for all teachers.

Library budgets get cut; librarian positions eliminated. Art, PE, Music, Band, Orchestra, Languages other than English, everything but state-tested courses gets cut.

For some children, band is the highlight of their day. The library is a refuge for others. Studies by Keith Curry Lance show that schools with strong library programs run by professional librarians correlate with higher student reading achievement.

In addition, we should not base funding on daily attendance but on enrollment. Between disease outbreaks and undocumented parents fearing ICE, the attendance requirement is an unfair way of allotting crucial funding.

Please raise the per pupil allotment at least \$1,300 per student so that we can better support our 5.5 million public school children in Texas. As an early Texas governor once said, "A cultured mind is the guardian of democracy."

Lou Ellen Cole

self

Fort Worth, TX

My name is Lou Ellen Cole. I have 6 great nieces and nephews in rural Texas schools. Also, I am volunteering at a Fort Worth elementary school Alice Contrares through my church University Christian Church and the Academy 4 program.

From what I've read, heard from teachers and what I've heard at FWISD School Board meetings, our schools are experiencing problems due to rising costs and stagnant funding. Thank goodness federal funds were available during COVID. But they are long gone! Good, solid public education is the future for our local communities, our state and our country. We need to invest in our future. Businesses expect strong school systems for their employees' families and for their future employment needs. Skilled school counselors, librarians, teachers and administrators are required to guide and teach our young citizens! Please approve the investment in our future by adding \$1300 per student.

Esmeralda Roque

school , self and school nurse

Weslaco, TX

I am a school Nurse located in the RGV and as a single parent with children of her own that is struggling to make ends meet. With the economy prices that are rocket high no government assistance it is hard to get by. I am struggling here literally. I have even applied for a second job to be able to stay afloat but I haven't had any luck, at this point I'm desperately thinking of working anywhere including fast food places that in sum fast food franchise are paying better than us that got some sort of education. Please, please help us. It is impossible for us not to get into debt to try to survive. Thank you for your time.

Martha Dunkelberger, Ph.D.

Self, retired professor of Communication Disorders

Houston, TX

This morning, the Houston Chronicle published an article describing the current situation in special education services in the state of Texas. According to the article, 780,000 children in Texas qualify for special education services. Public schools, governed by federal laws, are required to provide necessary services to all children who are identified as requiring them to have equal access to their education and/or to achieve their least restrictive environment during their school day. Those services could be simple adaptations to the curriculum (not counting off for spelling or sentence structure on a math test, perhaps) or to the student's classroom environment (smaller class size, preferential seating, distraction-free environment for testing, etc.). They could also include things as specialized as training a child who has cerebral palsy to tend to his own bathroom needs. They could include responding immediately to a seizure for a child who has a congenital neurological condition. They could include designing and supporting the use of a high-tech augmentative or alternative communication device for a child whose speech is unintelligible, but who is intellectually able to participate in regular education.

"About 70 private schools in Texas have identified themselves in self-reported data as having specialized programs for students with special needs." These schools are dramatically more expensive than are private schools that reject students with special needs. The proposed \$10,000 per student will be a drop in the bucket for the families who consider accessing those services through a private school enrollment. One administrator of a private school that claims to serve students with special needs was salivating at that windfall - imagining that he would increase from 50 students with special needs to 200 – and noting that he could increase class sizes and “recruit more teachers”. Sounds like a great deal for the school. Not so much for the child who needed that smaller class size.

Public money needs to stay in public schools. Children with special needs require individualized attention that cannot be scaled in a private school, unless the staff is specially trained to provide that attention. As private schools are not required to be licensed to teach in Texas, there is no guarantee that a strategy to “recruit more teachers” will meet the needs of our most vulnerable population of students.

If that money is there to pay for vouchers, why not sink it into public school special education programs? Why remove it and hand it off to people who may not be adequately trained to meet the needs of our children with special needs? Vouchers are wrong for Texas and wrong for our students.

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/school-vouchers-special-education-impacts-20162974.php>

Leticia Salazar

Lovejoy ISD

Allen, TX

I am a parent in Lovejoy ISD. Our district is known for excellence—exceptional teachers, innovative programs, and a strong sense of community. But year after year, we have been forced to chip away at what makes Lovejoy special due to inadequate state funding.

The \$220 increase in the basic allotment is simply not enough. Inflation has outpaced school funding for years, and without a meaningful increase, districts like Lovejoy are left making impossible choices—cutting programs, increasing class sizes, and struggling to offer competitive salaries.

Lovejoy has worked hard to stretch every dollar, but we are now at a point where we can no longer sustain the quality of education our community values without more support. HB 2 must include a significant basic allotment increase to ensure our students continue to receive the exceptional education they deserve.

Kimberly Berg

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kimberly Berg, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kimberly Berg

SBISD Parent

Amanda Messbauer

Self, Sales

Austin, TX

- Increase the basic allotment by \$1340 to \$7500 per pupil
- Index the basic allotment to inflation
- Roll teacher funding into the basic allotment
- Teacher Incentive Allotment in addition, not a replacement for adding teacher funding to basic allotment
- Move from attendance-based funding to enrollment-based funding
- Fully fund all existing and future mandates
- Reject vouchers in any form
- Reform recapture system

Dawn Dudley
Self/retired
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dawn Dudley and I am a community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Paula Starche
Self. Retired physician
Austin, TX

Dear Representatives, please vote no on school vouchers. I have personally seen the benefits of public education personally in my roots as a rural Texan and an urban mother and grandmother. Public schools have already suffered by funding withheld around this issue. Please vote to increase public school funding to current levels of need taking inflation into account. Please vote to attach funding to enrollment rather than attendance. Thank you for your service and courage

Emily Kaszczuk, Mrs.

Self/parent

Leander, TX

The increase to the basic allotment currently outlined is insufficient. The basic allotment should be increased by at least \$1300 to address inflation. Furthermore, funding should be tied to enrollment, not attendance, as the schools must provide for all students enrolled with space, teachers, materials, and supplies.

Yelin Martin

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Please increase funds for public school students. We have surplus that can also be used to fully funding schools. Public schools are the foundation of our economy and civilization.

Ray Pieniazek

Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas

Austin, TX

Committee Chair Buckley and Members of the Public Education Committee

I write these comments as I represent over 2600 agricultural science teachers and myself as a retired teacher. Schools need help. We should fund our schools at levels that may sustain our students to be taught at competitive levels in society. Teachers and all staff work hard each day to prepare our students to be competitors in the workforce. As we look at what is happening in society and the battles that teachers face to do their jobs, we need to respect them and the students that they are working hard with students every day. It is hard for me and my teachers to understand why we undervalue public education in Texas. I have been told by Representative Buckley that to raise the basic allotment by \$100 takes a half billion. By my calculation raising the basic allotment by \$200 equates to 1 billion. That sounds exactly like the number that is going to be given to private school education in HB3. Why do we not put our focus on the 5.5 million and fund our schools with an increase closer to \$1,000 which would get us closer to what is needed? It is hard to get behind a bill that does not give a large enough amount to make schools viable in the community they serve. We need to make teachers feel needed. Career and Technology education is what we need to have a prepared workforce. Lets fund schools at levels that show a need to prepare our students for the challenges.

Melissa Treadway
Wilchester PTA
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating

Ashley Tehranchi, Dr.
self
Houston, TX

I oppose public funding of private schools.

Gilbert Morales
London Independent School District
Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Gilbert Morales, I live in Corpus Christi and I am a parent and employee in London ISD. I wish to express my support for the additional state aid for regional insurance cost differentials included in HB 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance alone is more than \$606 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in the House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Rachael Cayton Barden
Self, school social worker
Austin, TX

Firstly, thank you for your service!

As a Texas school social worker, and a proud child of 2 amazing teachers, I want you to know that our state's public schools are extremely important to me, my family and my community. My daughter attends public school and my son actually attends a religious private school. However, I fervently disagree with vouchers and want nothing to do with defunding public schools.

To make sure that we have the public schools our children deserve, I ask you to support these measures immediately:

Increase funding for all Texas public schools this session using the basic allotment. The state needs to pay its fair share, not balance school budgets on the backs of local property taxpayers.

Revise school finance laws to provide fair and sufficient funding for all Texas students.

Say no to vouchers or similar schemes that would divert scarce public dollars to unaccountable private schools and programs.

Reduce the amount of time Texas students spend on high-stakes standardized testing. Tests should diagnose, not punish.

Reject the flawed A-F rating system for public schools.

Use positive, community-based solutions to support and improve struggling schools and students.

Texas students are our future, and their education is the most important public investment we can make. I hope you will agree with me by supporting these critical measures. I expect that you will make education a top priority. Thank you.

Lori Kirkpatrick
Self
Dallas, TX

Public ISDs need more funding. The amount proposed is inadequate clearly. Why does the state have money for subsidizing private schools but not for adequately funding public schools.

Furthermore, why are you increasing funding for charter schools that aren't accountable to the taxpayers? They do NOT have elected boards and I do not support more money going to them. If you want to increase charter funding you need to require elected boards to satisfy transparency to the taxpayers.

Ana-Alicia Horn
Self - Director/Software Comp
Mansfield, TX

I am asking for a Basic allotment funding increase of at least \$1300 so we can keep our great people and programs going in Mansfield ISD. It will allow us to pay our staff better, support our Special Education departments, and increase our safety measures to keep kids safe across campuses. Fund our schools sufficiently!

Freda Davis
Texas City ISD
Texas City, TX

My name is Freda Davis, I live in Galveston County, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee so this affects me and my family heavily. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$679 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Sarah Terrell
self retired
Houston, TX

I oppose HB 2. The additional money to charter schools just further tilts the playing field and gives them advantages over public schools. Since there are limited funds for education this also robs our public schools of funding. Texas has reduced funding for public schools over many years, refusing to keep up with enrollment and inflation, as well as higher needs as our schools teach ever more students from poor families. In particular, I object to the increase in funding charter schools facilities, and the lifting of restrictions on instructional facilities. Charter schools already have a poor record for spending public funds on facilities such as condos and private jets, as well as setting up corporations run by insiders who profit from faculties funds through management fees and other tactics. Public schools have to ask taxpayers if they want to issue bonds backed by the state, and sometimes, like last year in Houston, voters say no. But charters don't have to put anything to a vote. That's the core difference with charter schools. They are private corporations that are given public funds with almost no restrictions. This makes no sense and shows a total disregard for accountability from our state representatives supporting this bill.

Just today the Texas Tribune reports that one charter school superintendent makes \$800K per year, and sneakily reports only his base pay excluding huge bonuses on official documents. The charter industry is rife with such people who take advantage of the lack of accountability for there enterprise. This bill just gives such corrupt players more opportunities to rip off us taxpayers.

Again, please vote against HB 2. I am opposed.
Sarah Terrell

Yulissa Chavez
The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Austin, TX

My name is Yulissa Chavez and I am here to represent the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD). CTD is in favor of this bill with a request to eliminate the provision on state-supported living centers. Firstly, I would like to highlight the financial adjustments that aim to bring adequacy and efficiency to our school funding system. Switching to a service intensity model is evidence-based. Students in special education programs deserve tailored and supportive educational environments and thanks to these enhanced considerations, this bill will ensure that. Secondly, the focus on teacher preparation and retention is commendable. The establishment of preservice partnership programs reflects a forward-thinking approach to cultivate highly qualified educators. These initiatives not only support our future teachers but also foster environments where current educators are motivated and well-prepared, which in turn benefits student outcomes. The grant programs introduced for schools serving students with autism and those enhancing local capacity to support students with dyslexia display an understanding of a variety of educational needs. These grants will support schools in their efforts to innovate and provide specialized services, ensuring all students receive the education they need to thrive. While the bill makes robust changes, we have reservations about the state supported living center provision. The approach suggested might not align well with the overarching goals to integrate students into community-centered education environments. I urge this committee to consider adjustments to this provision. Instead, we want to echo support for evidence-based crisis intervention recommendations. Additionally, CTD recommends funding the provision of campus level mental health and behavioral health specialists to support educators and all students.

Carolyn Hise
self (teacher)
Georgetown, TX

Dear Representatives,

I urge you to maintain National Board Certification as a recognized pathway to earning the Teacher Incentive Allotment in Texas. As a high school math educator for 22 years, I can personally attest to the rigor and impact of this certification process. Throughout my career, I have worked to elevate mathematics education. I was honored as the Georgetown ISD Teacher of the Year in 2021 and nominated for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 2024. I have spent 18 years at Georgetown High School, teaching AP Calculus AB and BC for 14 years. Under my instruction, students have excelled in advanced coursework, presented capstone projects to professionals, and pursued STEM careers worldwide. Earning National Board Certification was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my career. The process requires exceptional teaching, deep reflection, and concrete evidence of student growth. It also demands ongoing professional development and contributions to the broader educational community.

This certification represents a significant investment of time, \$1,900 of my personal money, and expertise to uphold the highest teaching standards. Texas educators pursue National Board Certification with the expectation that their efforts will be recognized through reimbursement and eligibility for a TIA stipend. Removing it as a pathway would undermine this commitment and disincentivize teachers from pursuing one of the most rigorous professional certifications in education.

I urge you to uphold National Board Certification as a pathway to the Teacher Incentive Allotment. Recognizing accomplished teaching is essential to retaining top educators and ensuring the highest quality education for Texas students. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Hise, NBCT
Math Department Chair
Georgetown High School
Georgetown Independent School District

Christine Yates
self/public school parent
Conroe, TX

I am so glad you all are finally looking into increasing the daily allotment for Texas public schools! As a person who spends quite a bit of time volunteering in these schools, I'd love to leave some comments.

Texas public schools have been sorely underfunded for many years now. The 2019 increase was bare minimum, and I understand y'all are expecting another bare minimum fix to do the trick. While we're at it, changing the daily allotment to be paid by ENROLLMENT rather than attendance makes much more sense. The lights still need to stay on and staff still needs to be paid. \$250/student is quite honestly a slap in the face. We should be much closer to the national average, if not more. How can we boast about being a great state for business, large economy, etc. all while neglecting our children? I am tired of seeing our governor lie all over social media that our schools are funded while shelving tattered library books. Kindergarten teachers keep their reams of paper locked away so they can closely monitor how much they have left to make copies. Heaven forbid a new student show up last minute, there are no extra copies of the assignment.

Parents provide supplies like paper, crayons, and glue by the way. Many parents cannot simply send more as needed, as over sixty percent of Texas public schools are Title 1 eligible. Which leads us into another fun issue that this legislature could easily remedy and be seen as heroes statewide. Hungry kids don't learn well, why can't we feed these five million students? Food insecurity is a huge issue for our children, leads to anxiety, leads to poor performance. Feed the kids, get the grades.

So, to recap: increase daily allotment by thousands, \$250 is a disgrace. Change daily allotment to be paid by enrollment, not attendance. Feed the children.

Thank you.

Jennifer Dodd, Mrs.

self

Prosper, TX

Please keep provision 3.10 requiring that parents of special education, high school students need to be informed of the existence State Supported Living Centers as well as the admission process. Parents should be informed that their local LIDDA can be asked to submit an application to an SSLC on their behalf, or the parents may exercise their rights per SB 944 to seek admission directly through a court as their son or daughter's legal guardian. My son languished for 12 years in group homes. I asked representatives from his LIDDA (Denton County MHMR) numerous times about admission to the Denton SSLC, and they never offered to pursue admission. Instead, they misguided me by telling me son "would never get in" or "I wouldn't want that." My arguments were futile. The only thing they offered was that I could seek other HSC providers. This information was not only misleading, but it was also completely inaccurate. My son's 3rd group home closed its doors suddenly on December 16, 2022. After exhausting all other possible residential options (no HCS Provider would accept him due to his extreme needs), my son was admitted to the Austin SSLC as an emergency placement. The Collin County LIDDA Lifepath (very reluctantly) submitted my son's application. I was VERY instrumental in the process as I provided every single necessary document, doctor's signatures, etc., and yet, the Collin County LIDDA Lifepath took several days to send the application to Austin. By what seemed like a miracle, we received a call on December 28, 2022, that my son, John, was admitted to the SSLC in Austin. We drove him from Collin County where he was living at the time to Austin that evening. It has been a wonderful change for John and our family. His care team is incredible, he is safe, his medical needs are addressed, his medications are delivered correctly, and he is thriving. For extreme cases like my son's, persons with extreme behaviors and /or medical needs, the SSLCs are the only correct placement. Parents must be informed of their rights and options for the care of their adult children as they age out of the public school system. My son endured abuse and neglect in the group home setting despite my constant involvement in his care. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sarah Bernadac

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Bernadac, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jamie Preston

self/School Psychologist/Special Education Coordinator

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Jamie Preston. I live in Port Aransas, and I am a property owner and school employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Jessica Oladele

Self, Mom

Arlington, TX

Please increase school funding and do not approve ESA/Vouchers.

Michelle Braselton

London ISD Board Trustee

Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Michelle Braselton, I reside in Corpus Christi and I am a London ISD Board Trustee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for insurance alone is more than \$606 per student. This cost inhibits us from being able to pay for our teachers and essential needs. Our financial resources are extremely limited and the burden of paying such high insurance premiums puts our students and staff at a disadvantage. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Mary Hall, Retired Public School Teacjer

Self

Hewitt, TX

I am very concerned that the amount of money per student is far too little. Just as all of our daily expenses have gone up exponentially since 2019, so have the costs of education. Schools are having to make hard choices about closing schools, deleting programs and letting teachers go. This is no way to improve the quality of education. Please think seriously before you vote!
With sincere regards, Mary F Hall, retired teacher

Margarita Margarita

Self

Austin, TX

Vote no on Vouchers and ESA's, increase basic allotment by \$1300, and fund public schools based on enrollment not attendance.

Elizabeth Piner

self

Austin, TX

I support the funding increase of \$1,300/per pupil for public school students.

Taylor Johnson
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
- **Transportation:** The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating

staci johnson

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating

Jeff Abbott

Self/writer

Austin, TX

Teachers build the future of Texas. They prepare our students to be engaged citizens and for a variety of occupations. We need to spend the money to empower them for success. The Rainy Day fund has \$28 billion and the general revenue has a \$24 billion surplus, yet our school districts are having to close schools and shutter needed programs because of a lack of funding. Raise the allotment by \$1300 to give our teachers, and our support staffs, the funding they need to meet both student needs and the mandates of the state (how do we mandate more from our schools and then not fund them). We already pay our teachers less than the national average and then don't fund them properly. Set Texas on a course for success and raise the allotment. Thank you!

Laura Derkits, Mrs.

Port Aransas Independent School District

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Laura Derkits, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a public school parent. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Sean Fleming

Self. Academic manager for EdTech company

Austin, TX

Texas needs to do better. We cannot, in good conscience, keep underfunding our public school system. It is counterproductive if we want to be a leader in this nation, and it is morally wrong to short change the children of our great state. Please adequately fund our public schools.

Tracy Reinholt

Beaumont I.S.D.

Port Neches, TX

My name is Tracienne Reinholt, I live in Port Neches, TX, and I am a voter, taxpayer, property owner and school employee at Beaumont I.S.D. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. My school district's cost for windstorm insurance is considerable. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year. Thank you,
Tracy Reinholt

Kitty Kenyon

Self/retired

Granite Shoals, TX

Now is the time to fully fund public education. Texas businesses demand an educated workforce. There are not enough private schools (nor will there ever be) to accomplish this objective alone. Vouchers take money away from public education and produce no accountability on behalf of private schools. Public school money should not be held hostage in order to pass voucher bills. Now is the time to Fully Fund public education.

Melissa Endicott, Dr

Self/parent

Houston, TX

Committee,

My name is Melissa Endicott, I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive. As a parent of 3 neurodivergent students who receive support under IEP and section 504, removing the disability penalty and fully funding special education is extremely important to helping my kids succeed.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gap

Kyle Davis, Mr.

Self

Austin, TX

I am the father of two elementary school aged children. School funding in the basic allotment must be increased by more than the proposed ~\$220 per student. Our schools need a \$1000-2000 increase in the per student basic allotment. With a record Texas surplus and inflation from COVID over the past years, we can and need to increase the allotment to make our public schools great!

Cindy Fountain

Self/ Retail Merchandiser, Former Substitute Teacher

Cleburne, TX

Texas hasn't increased the basic allotment since 2019. This allotment needs a minimum \$1,340 per student increase to keep up with where it was 5 years ago. Yet, HB 2 proposes only \$220 more per student. Texas is among the worst states for school funding, ranking in the bottom 10 of per pupil spending. Texas has a large financial surplus. Texas students and teachers deserve better!

Gretchen Baughman

self 4th grade teacher

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Gretchen Baughman, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner, parent, and PAISD employee.. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Angie Thor

self

Mansfield, TX

Please increase funding by at least 1300 per student. This will help fund some of the many unfunded mandates and allow our schools to continue providing a top quality education for our students. Do NOT use public funds to educate private education. Please allow our representatives to represent the voters' choice and not that of the governor.

Alexa Higginbotham

self / Austin ISD

Austin, TX

\$220 increase per student is not nearly enough to keep up with inflation. Raise the per student allotment by \$1,300.

Melodee Thomas

self

Humble, TX

Good Morning,

My name is Melodee Thomas. I am the sister and guardian of Errell & Sherrell Jordan at Brenham State-Supported Living Center. My brothers have been residents there at the center since they were young. My brothers have both benefitted from living in Brenham and the state center. The center has given them the opportunity to thrive in a safe environment and become employable men. It is important for parents and guardian of intellectual disabled children be made aware of the advantages that that a State-Supported Living Center can offer their child. We should not just give information on residential treatment centers without given them the additional option.

Mindy Anstey

Myself, teacher in public schools

North Richland Hills, TX

I am STRONGLY encouraging you to please NOT pass school vouchers. This will dismantle our public education system, be a detriment to special education, and not be fair and equitable between public and private schools.

Norma Jost
Austin Retired Teachers Association
Austin, TX

I am the president of the Austin Retired Teachers Association. I am a recipient of public education and I taught in Austin ISD for 25 years. My two children also are recipients of public education here in Austin, Texas. I wonder why Texas pushing to have public education taken over by billionaires. How can we stop public education being destroyed, to save the future of our state? It worries me that last session, our body of government had presentations from states who have vouchers. You learned that these states, especially a couple of them, who had accountability tied to the vouchers, had devastating results. Plus, our rural education systems have fought these voucher scams, because the schools are the heart of their towns, just like they are in the neighborhoods of our cities. Politicizing the public right of education is a travesty. When our governor withheld school finance legislation, he became an enemy of what is important for the future of Texas. Your job today is to do what is right for public education across our great state. Please do what is right for the children, the educators, and the schools. This legislative body has been negligent in determining school finance that benefits all. Please fully fund an increased student allotment, a raise across the board for all educators, and kill this voucher scam.

Rebecca Passmore
self - public school teacher
Hardin, TX

I have been a public school educator for 23 years. I do not support any voucher program. Please keep tax payer dollars in the public schools, which offer more services for different student needs. Please listen to Texans, instead of corporations and big money.

Chris Steinbruck
Superintendent of Schools at Flour Bluff ISD
Corpus Christi, TX, 78418-4706, TX

My name is Chris Steinbruck, and I am the Superintendent of Schools for Flour Bluff ISD. As a taxpayer, voter, and school leader, I strongly support the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials in House Bill 2.

Flour Bluff ISD, located in Nueces County—one of the 14 Tier One coastal counties—is burdened with skyrocketing property insurance costs, especially for windstorm coverage. Since 2019, our premiums have drastically increased while coverage has declined, and our deductibles are now five times higher than those of inland school districts. Our windstorm insurance alone costs over \$375 per student—funds that should be used for teacher retention, student programs, and facility improvements.

We proudly serve nearly 5,600 students, including 1,100 military-connected students, while supporting Naval Air Station Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD), the world's largest rotary-wing repair facility, which employs over 3,500 people just four miles from our district. Through our partnership with CCAD, Army mentors work with students in our Tango Flight program, where they build an airplane, gaining hands-on skills that lead directly to careers in aviation, engineering, and the CCAD workforce.

Additionally, our NJROTC program is the most decorated in the nation, with 26 State and 11 National Championships. Our Chief Warrant Officer has secured nine nominations for Flour Bluff ISD cadets to attend elite U.S. military academies, opening life-changing opportunities. Next year, we plan to launch a Maritime program to support the Port of Corpus Christi—one of the largest ports in the world—creating additional career pathways for students.

However, our ability to expand these critical workforce programs is hindered by the millions we have been forced to pay in excessive windstorm insurance premiums. Unlike inland districts, we face significant financial disadvantages simply due to geography. These rising costs make it difficult to invest in our students, staff, and future workforce partnerships.

I appreciate the inclusion of this funding in House Bill 2, as it will provide much-needed relief to coastal school districts like ours. This support ensures we can continue delivering high-quality education and workforce training that benefits our students, our community, and the state of Texas.

Thank you for recognizing this issue and working toward a solution that keeps our coastal school districts competitive and strong.

Scott Kilgore, Supt

Ingleside ISD

Ingleside, TX

My name is William Kilgore, I live in Portland TX, and I am a Superintendent of a Public School District. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1100 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Brianna Madruga

self

Austin, TX

My daughter has attended public school in Austin since she was in Kindergarten. She is in 7th grade now and attends Kealing Middle School, an AISD school. Instead of choosing private school for middle school, she chose Kealing because of its reputation for quality teachers and the most elective options offered by any other middle school in Austin.

Kealing is a great school because of the dedication of the administrators and teachers, but years of underfunding is evident when you walk through the halls. That's because Texas has underfunded our public school system since 2019. AISD currently operates with a \$120 million budget deficit. In August 2024, Kealing had a large electrical fire that damaged multiple classrooms, forcing the school to delay the first day of school for a week and displacing students out of their classrooms for several weeks. Like Kealing, many AISD schools are in old buildings, and operating at such a financial deficit leaves our students vulnerable when unplanned expenses like this electrical fire occur. The money must come from somewhere, leading to even more cuts to programs that support our students (after school programs, loss of school counselors, loss of librarians, etc).

Our STUDENTS are the ones who suffer because of this underfunding. The good news is, Texas HAS the money to fix this! We have a Rainy Day Fund of about \$50 billion in unspent funds, so there should be no reason why we don't fully fund our public schools. The current proposed increase of \$220 per student in HB 2 is, frankly, insulting to Texans. This amount does not even come close to matching inflation costs and doesn't account for the years of funding neglect our public schools have endured. While our public school administrators and teachers are everyday super heroes for our students, they are being financially handcuffed by the state of Texas.

Texans are too proud of this state to accept anything less than the best for all of our students, yet we are among the lowest states in the nation for school funding. This is unacceptable! To get us to MATCH where our public schools were funded in 2019, we need to add \$1300 per student. Here's more good news: this funding would only cost \$20 billion of the Rainy Day Fund, leaving plenty of reserves for other projects and opportunities to improve our great state. Investing in our public schools must be a top priority. I urge you to fully fund our public schools and add \$1300 per student using the Rainy Day Fund reserves. Texans will accept nothing less than great public schools for our kids.

Brenda Olden
Self/Teacher
Lubbock, TX

I've been teaching for 29 years and am in the middle of my National Board Certification journey. Even though I'm reaching the end of my career, I'm still learning. It has been THE best professional development I've ever done to make me a more reflective and intentional teacher! To say that it's just a "certification" doesn't do it justice. I collect data and then formulate plans on how to improve my teaching methods to best reach all my students. Creating a new category that's below TIA's Recognized for NBCTs feels like an insult. NBCTs are a very small percentage in Texas but we are the ones who are going above and beyond the call of duty for our students in the classroom. Support your teachers. Support your children. Teachers are leaving the classroom in droves. I am now teaching a new subject because another teacher had left and our district didn't have the funding to fill her spot. I know of two other teachers who won't be coming back. But I also know of 4 other teachers who want to get their National Board so that they can get the funding to help support their families, otherwise they will have to go back to industry. Please raise the pay for NBCTs in Texas. It improves teacher retention, puts highly qualified teachers in schools, and helps improve the state of our Texas's future.

Stephanie Siddall
Port Aransas ISD Teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Stephanie Siddall, I teach in Port Aransas, and I am a PAISD employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members, especially since we already send \$0.76 of every dollar collected via property taxes in our district back to the state. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

John Bridges
Self
Austin, TX

I oppose any system designed to divert our property tax money to private schools. As a Texas public high school graduate — whose spouse and sons graduated from Texas public high schools as well — I know that our public schools need your support, not siphoning of their income to benefit those who choose to undermine them. At the core of American society stand our public schools. They can and should be a unifying force for our communities and the economic engine that powers our workforce. Schemes to take money out of that system will have disastrous effects across our state and tear us further apart from one another. Oppose these changes.

Elizabeth Sepper
self
Austin, TX

I am writing as a concerned mom of two elementary school aged kids in public school. Our teachers are the backbone of this state. They teach kindergarteners to learn to read and to love it. They explain math so that kids can understand, grow, and have a foundation to build into doctors, scientists, and businesspeople. They sing and dance and show love and kindness. And public schools do it all on a shoestring budget. But we've pushed them to a breaking point. The basic allotment has not been increased since 2019. It's still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite expensive additional mandates imposed by the government on schools and double-digit inflation. Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

Please raise the the basic allotment by \$1300. Please give our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve and districts the opportunity to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage. Do it for the littlest Texans and for the future of the great state of Texas.

Meghan Dougherty

self - educator

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the Public Education Committee:

I appreciate that the legislature is making efforts this session to increase school funding. It is abundantly clear to me that the state of Texas has not been pulling its weight in funding public education. I appreciate that this bill is trying to address that, but I don't think it goes far enough. Based on TEA's chart of spending, the state contributed \$4302 in 2019, and now it's down to \$4196. So, in spite of inflation, in spite of rising costs, in spite of a more competitive job market and fewer and fewer certified teachers, we have decreased state funding, allowing local and federal funding to pick up the slack. I plugged the numbers into an inflation calculator, and \$4302 in 2019 is equal to \$5400 today. So, at a minimum, the state should increase its contribution at least \$1100, but probably more, because we are on the verge of a teacher shortage crisis.

As someone who had been an assistant principal after COVID, I experienced firsthand the pain of staffing positions that I could not fill with qualified employees. And most of all, it pained me to see my students receiving a subpar education because we couldn't find a qualified Chemistry or World Geography teacher.

The state cannot depend on local and federal funding to fill the gaps. I just saw my property tax bills leap to an all-time high this year owing to new taxes, primarily for AISD, as it struggles to remain competitive and remunerate its teachers fairly. And of the increase going to AISD, I have heard that almost 70% of that is going into recapture. Moreover, with all the cuts happening at the federal level, I can foresee that we will not be receiving as much federal money. Has the state accounted for what it will do if federal funding is cut? This proposed spending needs to consider not just the short term, but the long term possibilities of less money coming from other sources.

It's strange how people constantly talk about running the government as a business, but then stop short at remunerating their employees. The benefit of working in the private sector is substantial pay raises and bonuses. We know that to attract the best employees we have to pay them. The attack on education has led to a hemorrhage of qualified, experienced teachers. The only way to reverse this trend is to demonstrate a strong commitment to paying teachers what they are worth, and rewarding them for the mentally, emotionally, and cognitively taxing job they do every day for our children.

Lisa Healy

Self

Midlothian, TX

Please consider not moving this bill forward as it increases government control over our school districts. Throws money at a problem (poor education system) and doesn't require schools to be more efficient with what they have. Including more SEL is completely unnecessary and only hurts our children. We should be working on bills to return our education system to that of a traditional Judeo-Christian system. Less government is what is needed. Keep it simple.

Cody Fernández, Dr.

Self, educator and parent

Austin, TX

For years now our public schools have struggled to serve every child. Serving all children is a necessary mandate of our public education system and one that no other education entity delivers. It's time to fund our schools adequately. This means increasing the basic allotment AND increasing the compensatory ed allotment and bilingual education allotment. Having a strong public education system is what has made our nation great and quite unique as we compare to other nation systems. Very few systems make the promise to educate every child the way that we do but we can no longer do that without the necessary funding. The Abbot administration has held funds hostage for too long it is time to do what is right for the children of the great state of Texas. In addition, if private schools are going to receive funds they should be subject to the same requirements as public schools. If STAAR is not appropriate for their students how can we possibly justify it for the hundreds of thousands public school children. Not doing this will create a divided system of class. Honestly we will be in danger of creating a system that mirrors that of many Latin American countries where the only way to get a strong education is through private institutions. This will make our state and our country weak. Fund public schools and stop vouchers!

Christopher Whorton
Mildred Independent School District
Corsicana, TX

Chairman Buckley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Texas House Bill 2. My name is Chris Whorton, and I serve as Superintendent of Mildred ISD, a rural school district in Navarro County. Like many rural districts, we strive to provide a safe, high-quality education while managing financial challenges that put us at a disadvantage compared to larger districts.

The Need for Increased Small School Allotment

Mildred ISD, like other rural districts, faces financial constraints that make it difficult to offer competitive salaries, instructional programs, and facility improvements. The increase in the Small School Allotment included in HB 2 is essential for funding equity.

This increase will allow us to:

- Offer competitive teacher salaries to attract and retain quality educators. Rural schools struggle to compete with urban and suburban salaries, making retention difficult.
- Expand instructional programs by updating curriculum, technology, and career/technical education opportunities.
- Maintain and upgrade facilities to ensure safe and effective learning environments. Many rural schools operate in older buildings requiring security and maintenance improvements.

School Safety Funding Challenges

Mildred ISD is one of the rural districts with its own police department, ensuring the safety of students and staff. Due to our rural location, outside law enforcement response times can be delayed, making on-campus security essential.

However, while the state has mandated increased security measures, it has not provided adequate funding to fully implement them. Rural districts, with fewer financial reserves, are disproportionately affected by these unfunded mandates. The additional funding in HB 2 would allow us to:

- Properly staff and equip our police department without diverting funds from instructional programs.
- Implement critical security infrastructure improvements such as access control systems, surveillance technology, and reinforced entry points.
- Expand mental health resources and training for officers and staff to support student well-being.

Ensuring Local Control for Rural Districts

One of HB 2's greatest strengths is recognizing that local school districts know best how to allocate funds. Rural communities face unique challenges, and flexibility in funding ensures resources are used where they have the greatest impact.

Conclusion

HB 2 is not just about funding—it is an investment in Texas students, particularly in rural areas like Mildred ISD. By increasing the Small School Allotment and addressing security funding gaps, this bill ensures that small districts can provide safe, well-equipped, and high-achieving schools for all students.

I urge you to support HB 2 and advocate for rural districts to receive the funding they need. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Whorton
Superintendent, Mildred ISD

Robert Zamora
Self/Teacher
El Paso, TX

Please help those of us that have committed to educating tomorrow's leaders have a sustainable income. This can happen by increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule starting pay for educators to at least \$45,000, and ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least 2 years experience receive a raise, all teachers with 5 or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3000, and teachers with 10 or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6000. While I do not oppose expanding the TIA, this should NOT be at the expense of these raises but rather through raises to the Small/Midsized Allotment and Basic Allotment. I also ask that you support raising the threshold to at least 40% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases.

Rich Weigand

Self, retired

Austin, TX

Please increase per student funding to \$1300 per. It's time for you to do the right thing for the students of Texas. Please.

Richard K.

Self, COO

Austin, TX

I am a Christian, a conservative, and a retired air-force veteran. My daughter is four years old. She has autism and complex medical needs. She attends public school because, despite my best efforts, there is simply nowhere else for her to go.

Yesterday, I called every private school program in and around Austin—something I've now done three times in her short life. I wanted to be absolutely sure of the facts before I shared them with you today.

Here's what I found:

- Most private schools charge between \$35,000 and over \$40,000 per year, plus fees.
- Two religious schools charge just under \$30,000, but they have no space—and they do not accept children with disabilities.
- Not one private school will accept my daughter, except for a single autism-specific school.

That one school? It costs nearly \$50,000 plus fees. It has a long waitlist and it's an hour away in traffic.

In contrast, my Austin ISD public school is three miles from home. It provides transportation, a certified special education teacher, a trained TA, and a small class size. This is the only option for my child—and for so many children like her.

Public schools are not just a choice; they are a lifeline. I urge you to fund them properly—starting with at least a \$1,340 per-student increase to the basic allotment and additional special education funding. Our children's futures depend on it.

Pamela Cook, Ms

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Vote NO for HB2! HB 2 will kill many public schools. Attaching any raises to this bill is just wrong.

Janet Conner

self AND PAISD teacher

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Janet Conner, I live and work in Port Aransas, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and employee of PAISD. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

William Chapman, Dr.
London ISD
Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Bill Chapman, I live in Corpus Christi, and I am the superintendent of London ISD. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for insurance alone is more than \$606 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Dolores Vela, Dr.
Austwell-Tivoli Independent School District
Tivoli, TX

My name is Dolores Vela, I live in Tivoli Texas, and I am a Superintendent (school employee) (taxpayer, voter, property owner, small business owner, parent, school employee, school board member, etc.). I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$ 1,170 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Robbie Ausley
self - retired office manager
Austin, TX

I have 2 daughters and a granddaughter who are dedicated teachers here in Texas along with thousands of other dedicated teachers and am saddened and appalled at the lack of support and respect our Texas political leaders have exhibited over the past few years, not providing funds for them to receive a raise since 2019. Please support our teachers and public schools by adequately financing and raising the funding level for our schools.

Nicole Verkerk
self
Austin, TX

I am writing to advocate for a much bigger boost to public education funding. We need at least \$1300 per student, not \$220. We need to keep up with inflation, fund teacher salary and get our districts out of a budget deficit. There is no reason for public schools to be underfunded in Texas. We have the money. We need to invest in our future.

Jenny Patel
Self
Houston, TX

Vouchers are not good for public schools. We should not take away funds from much needed public schools to give to the wealthy. They can afford private schools. We need autonomy over our tax dollars. Our future is with our children. We owe them more.

Heidi Langan
self/retired teacher
Austin, TX

Increase the minimum salary schedule to \$45,000. All teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with two years experience should receive a raise. All educators with five or more years experience should receive a raise of at least \$3,000. All educators with nine or more years of experience should receive a raise of at least \$6,000. Thank you!

Susan Salisbury, Mrs.
Self, retired teacher, still teaching part time under grants for disadvantaged students.
Cypress, TX

National Board Certified Teachers should keep their recognized status under the teacher incentive allotment

Mimi Zimmerman
Self, Teaching Assistant, World Religions course, Southern Methodist University
Fort Worth, TX

Public school teachers deserve a much needed pay raise. As it is, we are losing teachers left and right. It is time we recognize these important public servants and increase their pay according to the years they have served. I am a concerned citizen with many friends in the public school system, some of whom are burnt out and quitting. If we had given them a pay raise sooner, perhaps they would have felt appreciated and stayed on as a teacher. I hope you will vote for teacher's increased pay so that we can hold onto our current teachers and not need to hire teachers without certification to make up for a loss of certified teachers. Please vote for raises on this important issue.

Bridget Peterson
Self
Leander, TX

This bill, in conjunction with HB3, is an insult to the 6M student population and the countless individuals working for and supporting public schools.

The \$220 increase for basic allotment is a 3.5% increase. 3% was the rate of inflation for January alone and doesn't begin to address the rise since 2019, the last time this was addressed. This, coupled with the tie of student attendance, does little to address the funding needs required for our public schools to move up the ranking. Our family moved into the district we did because of the strong public schools and now due to funding shortages because of this body and our Governor programs are being cut, teachers are being cut, and quality of education is at risk.

Moreover, this bill promises to offer dramatic teacher pay change when in reality TIA is not available to all types of teachers, such as special ed, and is inconsistent across districts. As the spouse of a teacher who walked away from the profession, I assure you this will not help our state address the teacher shortage and does nothing to encourage retention nor attract individuals into the profession.

I implore you all to be better. Do better. Stop pushing school choice and actually get to work, of which you were elected to uphold, and fund our public schools properly. I am not alone in my ask and I assure you the people of Texas will not forget how much of a battle this has been. Your fate will be determined by the end product of this battle. Thank you.

Angela Lau
Self, IT Support Specialist
Austin, TX

Please increase the basic allotment by at least \$1000 more than the current bill proposes. Our students and teachers need more support than they currently receive, and if we increase the allotment, districts will be able to hire more skilled staff and make necessary curriculum improvements and enhancements to the end of further serving our students. Thank you.

Amy Gardner

Self, educator in a public school

Austin, TX

It looks like the current version of HB2 will increase the basic allotment (BA) to \$6,380 from \$6,160 per student (\$3.2 billion). This 3.57% increase is not enough; the increase needs to at least account for inflation since the last adjustment. Cumulative inflation from 2019 to 2025 is somewhere in the range of 18-25%. To account for that, the target should be more like \$7,400 per student just to get back towards the real-value-equivalent of 2019 funding levels. (Our spending per student in 2019 was in the bottom 20% of all US States.)"

Candra Schatz

Son - mother/guardian

EULESS, TX

I am writing to show support of this bill that would require a school district to provide the child's parent with information about placement in a state supported living center for children who may qualify. This is very important since most families are either not aware of this placement option, are discouraged from pursuing this option, or the SSLC option is framed as a rights restriction. I can attest personally to living in crisis for more than two years, all the while with support from the local LIDAA, and never knew that the SSLC was an option. I was assigned a crisis team and still, the SSLC was not provided as an option. I was given hundreds of pages of community providers to call for services but the SSLC was never offered to me. Finally, after three years of traumatic experiences in community group homes, I had a therapist recommend the SSLCs to me. I was scared but desperate. I had to insist that my local LIDAA file an application into the SSLC on my son's behalf. Even then I spent several months having to replay our history in the application process on paper and to state therapists to support the level of need and how we have exhausted all other means. Finally, we are established at the Denton SSLC, for almost two years now, and my son is thriving! He has lost weight into a healthy range, much reduced behaviors, and eliminated one psychiatric drug from his protocol!

Texas families like mine in crisis need options. The SSLCs are a very viable and safe option. Please ensure school districts remain required to share this information and connect families to these services and let them choose what is right for their child. Thank you for your support and consideration!

Candra Schatz 918-557-6272

Kat Patrick, Dr

Self

Round Rock, TX

Public schools need funding and not their lifeblood funneled to wealthier families to attend private schools, and wealthier because vouchers won't even cover the real cost so middle class and working people will be excluded while forced to use only underfunded schools. You already have Texas in the unenviable position of crap education, so fund it, pay teachers better, and make a good education available for all. That NEEDS the money you'll siphon to companies in the private industry instead of public money going to public education.

Teresa Scruggs

self (but I also support ATPE & TRTA), retired teacher (41 years)

Huntsville, TX

I strongly support ATPE's position on HB2 as outlined below. My perspective is shaped by 41 years of experience teaching in both public and private schools. I have taught in public school systems in middle-income areas, and for the past 25 years, in a low-income public school system in Huntsville, Texas. It's crucial that we increase support for our teachers, especially those serving students and families in economically disadvantaged regions of our state. Too many teachers are leaving these areas for higher pay and better incentives in other districts, resulting in a "revolving door" of staff. Constantly training new teachers every year is not only costly, but it also hampers the quality of education that students receive. Please prioritize retaining quality teachers in all areas, particularly in low-income communities!

ATPE's recommendations on HB 2 for the House Public Education Committee include:

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size allotment and Basic Allotment. ATPE does not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. ATPE supports raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Aaron Ward

Self-Assistant Principal-Public Education

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I appreciate your commitment to supporting Texas educators and students through HB 2 and HB 3. As an administrator in a public elementary school, I see firsthand how critical it is to invest in our educators to ensure the success of our students.

I urge you to consider the following recommendations for HB 2:

Increase the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure all starting educator salaries are at least \$45,000, helping to close the pay gap between small/rural and large/urban districts.

Provide meaningful salary increases for experienced educators:

Teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience should receive a raise.

Those with five or more years of experience should receive at least a \$3,000 raise.

Those with nine or more years of experience should receive at least a \$6,000 raise, including administrators.

Fund these increases through an increase in the Small/Mid-Size and Basic Allotments to ensure sustainable, long-term funding.

I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but it should not come at the expense of these much-needed raises. While TIA is available on my campus each year, our educators have consistently voted against it. This highlights the need for across-the-board salary increases rather than performance-based incentives that do not benefit all educators equally.

Additionally, as the law currently requires that 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment go toward educator pay, I strongly recommend raising this threshold to at least 40% to provide greater financial support for teachers and paraprofessionals.

Thank you for your time and for your dedication to strengthening Texas public education. I appreciate your consideration of these recommendations

Laura Victoria Potocny-Krider

Self/Educator

Georgetown, TX

As a Texas public educator, I want to let you know that I support the following recommendations for improving HB 2, which is currently under consideration by the House Public Education Committee:

- Increasing the Basic Allotment per pupil by at MINIMUM \$1,400 in order to keep up with inflation. As I'm sure you're aware, the BA has not been increased since 2019, yet the State of Texas has gone through unprecedented growth since then & operational costs have skyrocketed due to inflation.
- Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.
- Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.
- Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.
- Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and Basic Allotment. I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I support raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Thank you for your service in the Texas House.

Claudia Ullrich

Texas mom and concerned citizen

Austin, TX

I support HB 2 and raising the basic allotment. However, the proposed increase of \$220 from \$6,160 to \$6,380, is nowhere near enough. Our schools need closer to a \$1,300 increase, to more than \$7,500 per student, just to keep up with inflation and get us back to 2019 funding levels. Please invest more in our state's children. We have the money. We also need funding based on enrollment, not attendance.

Scott Wrehe
Lewisville ISD
Lewisville, TX

We urge the Education Committee to consider a declining enrollment allotment for districts in Texas, similar to how fast growth districts receive a fast growth allotment. The fact is that revenue is decreasing faster than a district can decrease their costs because the decline in enrollment is spread out across the district - meaning it takes time before staffing reductions can be realized and with inflationary costs the electricity and insurance bills along with facilities, safety and security and other costs are not able to be reduced at the pace of which revenue is being lost. HB 2 does include funding for the ADA decline that would allow funding based on an ADA floor of 95% of the prior year ADA, subject to an appropriations cap of \$50 million per year. For a district that is experiencing significant enrollment decline such as Lewisville ISD, an appropriations cap of \$50 million per year for all impacted districts would leave very little funding to help offset our funding loss because of declining enrollment. Exacerbating this situation is the fact that Texas is only one of six states to fund schools based on attendance and not on enrollment. The TEA Annual Report for 2024 stated that schools received \$10,800 on average per student in total M&O for 2023-24. Lewisville ISD received an average of \$9,829 per student, which was \$971 per student less than the state average. Our average daily attendance for that year was 45,235 so we were underfunded by \$43.9 million when compared to the state average. Additionally, recapture districts make up a significant percentage of the declining enrollment districts in Texas, so not only is revenue being lost but recapture payments often go up as property taxes increase but student enrollment decreases. This means recapture districts with declining enrollment are doubly hit with revenue losses. Currently, 28 states provide protections for school districts experiencing enrollment declines.

We also urge the committee to increase the Basic Allotment to address rising costs due to inflation that school districts are facing. The Basic Allotment should be increased by \$1,340 to address inflation and provide competitive pay for teachers, classroom aides, bus drivers, child nutrition workers, counselors, special education staff, etc. Since the Basic Allotment was last increased in 2019, the district's property insurance has increased by \$4.2 million, electricity has increased by \$3.2 million, appraisal district costs have increased by \$1.6 million, and fuel has increased by \$1.3 million for a total increase of \$10.3 million from the district's operating budget.

To ensure our students receive the high-quality education they deserve, we urge the legislature to: Significantly increase the basic allotment to address inflationary costs; revise the ADA decline funding to remove the insufficient \$50 million cap, and to make it more responsive to districts with large declines and fully fund special allotments.

Spencer Wagley
self teacher
Cypress, TX

Focus on increasing the basic allotment, specifically make 40% of the increases from the basic allotment go to pay increases.

Stephanie Ertel, Ms.
Self - retired attorney
Mountain Home, TX

While it is essential that funding for public education increase on a per-student basis, the proposed \$220 increase in the allotment is woefully insufficient. It is estimated by Representative Talifaro and others that it will require an increase of \$1,340 per student just to bring current funding equal to 2019 levels. There has not been an increase since 2019. In 2023, the Governor sacrificed per student increases in an effort to force the legislature to approve his voucher plan. The legislature wisely refused to approve vouchers and so the much-needed increase in public school funding was never approved. Amend HB2 to bring the funding level up and eliminate the doubling of funding for charter schools. Public schools are required by the 1876 Constitution! Public schools enabled Texas to rise from a frontier state to leadership in so many fields, and the need for adequately funded public schools has not been addressed. Support your constituents and their children now and in the future. If HB 2 is not amended by providing adequately per student, do not support it. Find a bill that will fund our schools and vote for it. No action on HB3 until HB2 has adequate funding in it.

Briana Kirby
Self - Technical Writer
FORT WORTH, TX

I would like to express my strong concern regarding the future of public education in Texas and urge you to prioritize the adequate funding of our public schools while voting against any school choice voucher proposals, such as Senate Bill 2. Texas has long prided itself on its public education system, but our schools are struggling to keep up with the growing demands of our students and communities. For years, public schools have faced increasing challenges: deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate funding, etc. These challenges are only compounded by rising costs in healthcare, teacher salaries, and safety measures. Yet, state funding for education has remained stagnant, while the cost of providing a quality education has risen sharply. The proposed Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and vouchers will only exacerbate the issue by diverting much-needed resources away from public schools.

Opposing School Choice:

I am also deeply concerned about the push for school choice programs, particularly vouchers, which will divert taxpayer dollars away from public schools and into private institutions. The evidence from states that have adopted similar school choice programs is concerning:

In Indiana, the state's voucher program has resulted in students performing worse academically than their peers who stayed in public schools. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that voucher recipients had lower test scores than public school students, undermining the claim that school choice improves educational outcomes.

Louisiana has experienced similar issues. The expansion of charter schools in New Orleans, while initially celebrated, has led to a decline in overall student performance. Public schools have suffered from funding cuts as more students have moved to charter schools, and many of these charter schools have not provided the quality of education promised, especially for students with special needs.

In Arizona, the state's voucher program has disproportionately benefited wealthier families, leaving low-income students with fewer educational options and draining resources from public schools. Public school funding has been negatively impacted, with fewer resources for the schools that serve the most vulnerable children.

These states provide clear evidence that school choice programs do not consistently improve education but rather result in the further depletion of resources for public schools. Rather than introducing a program that risks undermining public education, Texas should be investing in our schools to

I urge you to increase funding for public education, which is the backbone of opportunity for all students in Texas. Without additional funding, schools will continue to face layoffs, overcrowded classrooms, and cuts to essential programs like special education, arts, and athletics. Teachers, who are already underpaid and overworked, will continue to leave the profession, and students who rely on public schools will suffer.

Stacy Harrell
Self
Pflugerville, TX

I have 2 children in public school and see on a daily basis how underfunded our schools are. Teachers are underpaid and overworked. Important programs are being cut and the ones that suffer are the children. A civilized society can only function when it takes care of its weakest members. Taking public dollars to subsidize private school for the rich, only hurts us all as a society. Instead, take that money and fix our public education. Make no mistake, the issues with public school are self-inflicted by Abbott and at any time can be properly repaired and restored, with proper per student financial allotment. Every child deserves a good education, not just the ones whose parents have money to do so.

Donald Stephens
Self
Whitewright, TX

The raises just are not good enough very sorry. If it is not at least 10000 more, sadly I just can not afford it anymore. I am planning on leaving the profession if it is not more because I just can not afford it anymore. SORRY !!!!

Heidi Boles

self, Texas Public Educator

Fort Worth, TX

Dear House Committee Members,

I am writing in regards to funding for public education as being proposed in HB2.

My name is Heidi Boles and I am a resident of Tarrant County. I have been a public educator for 30 years, am a product of Texas public education and my three children each attended Texas public schools.

I have personally seen the consequences of the dire decisions that my local districts have been forced to make due to lack of funding that has led to budget deficits. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, which has resulted in school districts being \$10 billion behind this year. This means that my school district is operating with only 80% of the funding it had in 2019. Since COVID, schools have relied on federal funds to help make up the difference, but that funding is gone. We are already seeing districts forced to close campuses. Programs for after school care and other students supports are being removed and schools are losing necessary staff like librarians and counselors. This is unacceptable.

I understand that the state has a massive balance in the Rainy Day Fund, as well as unspent dollars from past years. The Texas Tribune has reported that amount to be near \$50 billion dollars.

Please consider using these funds to help schools catch up to the level of funding they had in 2019 by adding an additional \$1,300 funding per student. This would cost approximately \$20 billion, and the state would still have an excess of funds to use for other needs.

I cannot think of a more worthy investment than our Texas Public Schools. Businesses that are moving their headquarters to Texas are bringing families who expect strong school systems - but schools are not as likely to excel if they are not properly funded.

Finally, I hope each of you would agree that absolutely no public funds should go to private schools through the voucher programs. You have likely heard from thousands of your constituents on this issue. It would not be a popular decision and I fear it would cost a backlash at the polls.

Let's fix this problem. We have the means to do so.

Thank you for your time,

Heidi Boles

Susan Moffat

Self, Retired Editor

Austin, TX

Dear Chair Buckley and Members of the House Education Committee,

School districts all across Texas are facing severe budget deficits due to the legislature's repeated failure to adequately fund our public schools as required by the Texas Constitution. It is in your power to address this issue. Please do the right thing by Texas students by:

- Increasing school funding by at least an additional \$1,300 per pupil. This is the minimum amount needed to bring Texas schools back to where they were in 2019 in real dollars.
- Tying school funding to actual enrollment, not daily attendance. It costs the same to run a school whether or not a few kids are absent on any given day. Let's not pretend otherwise.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Susan Moffat

Parent and taxpayer

Robyn Montoya

Self/Teacher

Amarillo, TX

As a voter and public education participant my recommendations for HB 2 include:

- *Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.
- *Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.
- *Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.
- *Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size allotment and Basic Allotment. I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above. As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I support raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Sue Vallejo

None

Round Rock, TX

I support HB 2 , our public school are vastly underfunded. Please increase funding for public schools that serve ALL students & insurers that our kids of today are educated to be our leaders in a few years.

Norma Laird

Self/retired teacher

Spicewood, TX

As a retired teacher, school volunteer and grandmother of two children currently attending public schools in Texas, I can testify from multiple perspectives the need to support our schools and increase funding that, at the minimum, is in keeping pace with inflation. Student funding has stagnated since 2019 at \$6,160 per student. Simply with keeping up with the cumulative inflation of 23.45%, the state should increase funding by \$1,444. Texas is in strong competition for which state cares least about public school education and the proposed \$220 increase is a joke and slap in the face to our schools. Schools have many needs: repairs, personnel, enhanced safety, teachers, innovative programming on all levels and programs that inspire positive character development. The sad gesture of \$220 per student falls short of the mark and even the moderate \$1,444 is less than what schools need but would be a good start in the right direction. It is shameful the way our wealthy state has treated public education and now is the time to change a miserly, cruel underfunding of public education to a stance of good core values that demonstrates a caring of our children, schools and society.

Jessica Borowy

Mom of Students in AISD

Austin, TX

Thank you all for your service to the public and to our students. To that end I would urge you to please provide the \$1300 per student increase that our schools so desperately need. I feel this is the bare minimum to allow Texas public schools to catch up from the serious lack in resources when inflation costs have risen like crazy with no commensurate increase. I would also ask that this funding not be tied to any specific programs, as that is an undue burden on schools that are already struggling to meet basic needs. Public schools are one of the great equalizers in Texas and they need to remain strong for the future of Texas- these are our future leaders we are educating. Thank you.

Kyle Clark

Austin Achieve Public Schools (Board Member)

Round Rock, TX

My name is Kyle Clark and I'm on the board of directors for Austin Achieve Public Schools in Austin. Our mission is simple - we want to provide a high-level education for all of our scholars, ensure they are college ready, and graduate them to begin their next steps after high school. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way [school name] meets the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. Why should they count for less?

We believe ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Chelsey Rictor

Self/Instructional Designer

Denton, TX

The \$220 "increase" per student proposed by this bill is laughable. The people are not fooled. This is hundreds less than 2019 and does not account for recent inflation. We demand at least a \$1,300 increase per student in order to address the current budget crisis created by the legislature.

Iori Quirino

self/educator

Amarillo, TX

As a voter and as an educator I fully agree to significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

Robert Mueller
Texas Impact
Wimberley, TX

School Districts all over the state are suffering with huge budget deficits because of the state underfunding schools since 2019. With no increases for inflation, \$10 billion has been cut over the past six years, much of it spent in a WASTEFUL funding of Project Lonestar at the border which has been both unnecessary and ineffective. Houston has a \$250 million deficit, Austin \$120 million, Dallas \$160 million.

- Governor Abbot and Mike Morath are saying that schools have the most money they've ever had. That's false. They're using numbers from two years ago that include extra federal funding that came during COVID. That funding is long gone. And there's a good chance that federal funding that Texas schools depend on will shrink over the next several years.
- School districts are \$1,300 per student behind where they were in 2019 in real dollars.
- The legislature HAS THE MONEY TO SUPPORT THIS INCREASE which will bring our schools back to the level of funding in 2019, which was considered adequate. It will take \$1,300 per student in order to get to this point. Adding the funding to the basic allotment would be the most fair solution across all school districts, rather than telling districts how to use the funding. Different districts have different needs.
- The current funding bill (HB2) has an increase of \$220 per student. While better than nothing, this does not even come close to keeping up with inflation. School districts will continue to fall further behind.
- Texas schools continue to be in the bottom ten for school funding. While we brag about being the best state for business, our failure to fully fund our schools means we will never have a first-class school system.

Lauren Decker
Self/ Parent
Stamford, TX

Our world has changed a lot in the past 6 years. The costs of doing business and running a school effectively are among them. The basic allotment increase of only \$220/ student does not address the disparities in public school finance. One could argue that the amount per student should have been closer to \$1000 to address the budget shortfalls most districts across the state are facing. It is a shame that the legislature reached agreement on such a paltry sum. When school board members make tough decisions on budgets in their school buildings, it would be helpful, especially for small schools like ours to have each student valued by the state. Our teachers are doing the best they can and if we had more money per student, we could pay them more adequately for their work. We could also afford better resources to keep our students safe. We could upgrade the transportation that is expected to drive down rural roads and also transport our students to athletic and interscholastic events around the state. We need more from our state. Our students- this next generation of Texans deserve better.

Angela Halbert
Self
Houston, TX

As a voter and an educator, I vote for T-shirt pay races. I don't believe that the money should come from TIA.

Crichelle Cockrell

Self

Missouri City, TX

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and Basic Allotment. ATPE does not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above. Please pass a fair and equitable pay increase for educators. We work hard to educate our students despite all the changes and obstacles thrown our way.

Denice Bradbury

Self

Colorado City, TX

As an educator, of course I am all for raises as I teach in a rural district with low pay. I still strongly feel the voucher system (which has not been successful in any other state) will only benefit a small percentage of Texas students. Please vote NO to vouchers, YES to educator raises to close gaps between rural and urban districts, and vote to continue to fund the raises instead of burdening the districts who are already struggling.

Annie Livingston

self

Austin, TX

I am a mom to two elementary-aged children. I grew up in Texas and had a wonderful public education experience. I moved my family to Texas because I wanted my boys to experience the same. Instead, the TX government is slowly defunding our schools...making class sizes larger, harder to get extracurricular experiences, not as much special education/therapy, etc. It is saddening that our schools haven't been funded properly in FIVE years!!! We are slipping slowly to the very bottom of the rankings for education by state. Please help our children get an education they deserve, and pay these wonderful teachers what they deserve!

Elizabeth Currie

Self

Austin, TX

No vouchers!!! We want to strengthen public schools not rob them!

Satish Vathare

Self

Georgetown, TX

We need the \$1,300 per student increase that will get us back to 2019 levels and get Texas schools out of the budget crisis. It's for our kids and future of our country.

L. Marie Lebron

Self - COO

Austin, TX

I am a mother of four children in Austin ISD—each of whom receives special education services. I am a public school volunteer, advocate, and child advocate. And I am furious.

Every single lawmaker in Texas should be ashamed. Our wonderful and beloved Texas public schools have become The Hunger Games, with our children and their futures held hostage and used as political pawns. I watched yesterday's HB2 testimony, where intelligent, dedicated people stood before you like Oliver Twist: "Please sir, can we have some more?" Meanwhile, lawmakers seemingly expect gratitude for a measly \$220 increase to the basic allotment—a number so out of touch with inflation and actual district needs that it's insulting.

Let me be clear: We need and demand better.

- A minimum \$1,300 increase to the basic allotment—because anything less keeps districts in crisis. **Our districts need more than \$1,300 increase to the basic allotment.
- A transportation funding increase that reflects actual costs—because the last adjustment was made when gas was \$1.00 and bus drivers made \$6.50/hour. Today, districts pay drivers \$24/hour minimum, and we all know gas prices are not a dollar.
- An increase in special education funding—because our kids deserve the services and supports they are legally entitled to.
- Higher teacher pay—because we cannot retain educators when they're underpaid and overworked.
- Reimbursement for special education evaluations—because districts shouldn't have to fight for what they're required by law to provide.
- Full funding for Dual Language programs—because our multilingual students deserve access to a high-quality education.
- A complete revamp of recapture—because Austin ISD is paying over \$900 million annually while unable to afford to educate its own students.

You were elected to lead. Start acting like it. Do your jobs and fully fund our schools.

Karina Martinez

self

Pflugerville, TX

Public schools don't have enough money. Raise the basic allotment, you have the money. No to vouchers until the basic allotment is raised to the same as the vouchers, \$10,000!

Aaron Kimball

Self

La Porte, TX

To the House Committee, I just wanted to voice my own opinion on HB2 as it pertains to Teacher pay raises. I am a teacher and as I'm sure you all know, because of inflation and other factors our schools are stressed, but also our salaries are stressed. I do worry about the future of my school because I know that we have a multimillion dollar budget deficit. I am definitely in support of raising the student allotment, but I also feel that it would be prudent to put money aside for teachers as well. If you only raise the basic student allotment a small amount, but students leave the schools for other schools using the ESA funding, then how will our schools be able to stay above water? If the provisions your committee are mostly focused on are increasing this basic student allotment, I would like to advocate for a huge increase to accommodate the loss of students because of the ESA vouchers. In addition, I would definitely prefer if there was language in the bill similar to the Senate bill that gives teachers with a certain number of years, like for example three years, and then six years, certain guaranteed pay increases. Thank you so much for listening and considering my words, as well as other teachers' words on this matter.

Aaron Kimball

Shawn Brentham, Mr

self

Bedford, TX

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and Basic Allotment. ATPE does not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. ATPE supports raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Daniel Selvaggio

Indivisible, Oxfam, Self - Worker's Comp

Temple, TX

Hello, I am writing with urgency that this state put PUBLIC Education above school vouchers. The idea that vouchers provide "School Choice" is disingenuous. Texans already have school choice. Public Education is foundation to a functioning democracy. Any attack on Public Education is Un-American. Wherever vouchers have been implemented, the intended "benefits" never materialize. They have repeatedly proven to increase private schools costs that allows families that are already attending private schools our public tax dollars, while not providing access to Texans at large. You can choose to put your child into any school but when you try to take our money to pay for your private school, that is a NO!

Texans are sick and tired of the lies about school vouchers and we DEMAND better representation. We DEMAND our children's futures are secure via PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Robert Salisbury

Self

Cypress, TX

The

National Board Certified Teachers should keep their recognized

status under the Teacher incentive allotment

Hannes Mande,, Dr.

self (college professor)

Austin, TX

Please increase the basic student allotment by at least \$1,300. Our public schools in Texas are desperately underfunded. If you have kids, and are not sending them to a private school, you will know.

Respectfully,

Caroline, Hannes, Ellen & Felix Mandel

Kimberly Kimberly

Self

Spring, TX

So many Texans do not want this bill. When will our representatives listen to us? We need to fund public education and not give vouchers that won't benefit those who can't afford to go to a private school even after these vouchers.

Reed Bilz, Ms

Texas Indivisible 12

Fort Worth, TX

Due to tax relief last session, public schools are cash strapped. They need more money allotted per student enrolled. An additional \$220 would bring Texas closer to the national average, but \$300 would help make up for the struggles the districts have had to endure.

Charter schools do not need more money. The majority offer inferior education and public money should stay with public schools.

Sara Villarreal

KIPP Public Schools

San Antonio, TX

My name is Sara Villarreal and I'm on the board of KIPP Texas Public Schools. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way KIPP meets the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. KIPP serves more than 30,000 students across Texas with a focus on uplifting our children in the neediest neighborhoods. Nearly 94% of our students are from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. KIPP is committed providing high-quality educational facilities to kids who otherwise do not have access. We must ensure our kids are given the same opportunities as kids from other zip codes.

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Susan Wright
Self/Social Worker
Fort Worth, TX

Greetings Esteemed Representatives,

As a proud benefactor of the Fort Worth public education system, I am asking that the House Education committee and the Texas Congress as a whole act to increase the current financial allotment of \$220 per child to at least \$1300 per child. This would not be a bid for excess or extravagant spending, but rather the decision of an informed and financially literate congress to account for the impact of inflation in the last several years. For the sake of government efficiency, I would also ask that the committee enshrine an annual/semi-annual built-in adjustment of the allotment per child to account for inflation instead of having to vote and discuss at length.

I attribute my formative years in the Texas public education system (JT Stevens Elementary, Wedgewood Middle, and Southwest HS!!) to my development as an enriched, social, considerate, creative, intelligent, and engaged individual. I worry that students who are currently a part of the public education system in Texas will be negatively impacted in terms of their intellectual and social development (on top of the negative impact of the pandemic) should the intended allotment remain at \$220 or fail to reach the current inflation-adjusted amount of \$1300. Considering how poorly Texas tends to perform nationally in terms of its public education, it is clearly important for Texas to adapt its financial strategy in order to establish itself as veritable equal to other states--many of which have already understood the need to adjust for inflation. This ask is much simpler than chartering anew or creating ESAs because it involves fortifying the system that we already have and making it more sturdy and effective. Knowing this, I ask that the committee raise the individual allotment per student to at least \$1300 to account for inflation and to make this allotment one that automatically adjusts for inflation.

Additionally, I would like to express my interest that public education funds not be directed towards charter schools for their facilities maintenance if they, as an arm of publicly funded schools, already receive more money per student. Instead I would ask that money be directed towards traditional public schools for their maintenance or for supporting the mental and physical health of students or some other creative and positively impactful venture. While I don't want charter school children to suffer, I also don't want physical beautification to be our highest priority when it comes to Texas schools and I would rather Texas funding be put towards the academic enrichment of our students in public school and not just the beauty of our buildings.

I thank you for the work that you do for Texas and hope we will be united in this front to take care of our public school students!

Molly Anderson
Self/HR Consultant
Austin, TX

Dear House Public Education Committee,
My name is Molly Anderson and I have child in pre-k in public school her ein TExas.

I was raised by two former Texas Educators; my dad was a high school band director and my mom was an award winning high school speech and debate coach. This is my first time having a child in Texas public schools and I've had the opportunity volunteer and build community at her school.

I've been reading in my local paper and talking with teachers about all of the cuts that my local school is having to make because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Sincerely,
Molly Anderson, a Native Texan who is passionate about accessible education for ALL students

JD Pierce
self - Small Business Owner and Homeschooler
Carthage, TX

As a proud America First Texan, I support President Trump's commitment to safe schools and traditional values. HB 2 focuses on funding, but it misses the mark on addressing critical school safety post-Uvalde and ensuring classrooms teach American history and values, not divisive ideologies like DEI.

I call on this committee to amend the bill to include mandatory safety funding like teacher concealed carry training and clear guidelines prioritizing patriotism and traditional education (i.e. 1776 Report) so our kids learn to love this great nation and stay safe in their schools.

Betty Ellsworth
Henrieta ISD
Henrietta, TX

As a board trustee, it thrills me to see the advancements this session in compensating both school districts and teachers for the impact they have on Texas children. The increase in the basic allotment is a good start, but it does still seem unfair when private schools are getting a full \$10K with limited restrictions on its use. Let's not even go as far as to say "let's level the playing field"; lets look at what an increase of roughly \$200/per student can actually do in a small district such as ours (<1000 students)? That's an increase of about \$20k, period. Now I've always been taught never to look a gift horse in the mouth, but it's been almost six years since any increase has been passed, and in that meantime, we've suffered through COVID and stifling inflation in property insurance, utility costs, and food/commodities. Of that \$35 billion in reserves (that weren't appropriated in that 6 year period), wouldn't it be prudent to repair the damages that school districts have suffered?

Additionally, although the TIA is also another great start to rewarding the professionals that truly come to work each day with the passion to make a difference in children's lives, small school districts rely on more than just the instructional leader for their educational success. First of all, a first year teacher in our school district does not make \$60K, or \$52K, or even \$40k annually. A certified, beginning teacher in our district has a annual gross of \$36K and \$250/month contribution towards their skyrocketing health insurance plan. Some might argue that the cost of living in a small community is much cheaper than in an urban one - but that's not necessarily true. Food, utilities, property insurance/health insurance, vehicle purchases/insurance, clothing, etc., are pretty much universal costs no matter where you live. The only thing that may be somewhat different is housing costs, but when you factor gas/wear/tear in having to travel distances to shop for food, dining, clothes, entertainment, church, or medical services, the disparity starts to shrink. By increasing the small schools allotment, it will help give local control to offset these pay differences that cold impact not only our teachers, but our para-professionals, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and maintenance crews. All of these positions are integral to the success of any school district and should be awarded what they are truly worth, and not deprived by geographical location. Thank you for hearing my discourse on what I believe should be adequate funding for school districts across this great state!

Erin Otness, MD
Self
Houston, TX

As a pediatrician and a parent of children who have attended public school gifted programs, public school special education programs and a Christian private school - I implore you to reject vouchers and adequately fund public education in Texas.

April Graham
self - Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Please keep National Board Certification (NBC) as a pathway to TIA designation at its current level (Recognized). Becoming a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) provides another, complementary avenue for teachers to show their worth and earn a TIA stipend. Only 6% of Texas teachers have been able to earn TIA money in the 6 years since its implementation, so keeping NBC as part of the program will help. This certification is not a simple test - it is a rigorous process that takes most teachers two or more years to complete. Many teachers submit multiple times before achieving the designation. We submit videos, lessons, data, and lengthy written commentary to show our skills and knowledge. The program also requires a rigorous renewal process every 5 years, much like TIA. Honoring NBCTs is a way to attract teachers to the state and to rural districts, and retain teachers in the profession.

Harrison Bryant, Public Schools
Self
Austin, TX

I am very concerned that the per student allotment is too low. At the very least it needs to be at pre pandemic levels (2019). It feels like the state is intentionally sacrificing our educational system.

Jessica Fritsche

Self - marketer and parent

Garland, TX

As the parent of a wonderful elementary age child, I support increasing the Basic Allotment to at least \$7500 per student. Our teachers and schools work so hard to educate the next generation of Texans with little support, especially when it comes to funding things like supplies, books, activities, and more. Our students deserve more funding.

carroll Lum

Conroe ISD

Conroe, TX

We have way more dyslexic kids than we can serve in Texas need more funding to hire more teachers

Shannon Wade, Mrs

Self

Plano, TX

School vouchers hurt the future of the majority of school student in Texas. Why would you do this? Political greed? What affects one of us will eventually effect all of us....even you.

Rhonda Houston

North Hi Mount E.S. - Teacher

Fort Worth, TX

Being in Education for over 15 years, more funds are essential per student to met their need. I do not agree to funds being used toward charter nor private instead of public schools.

Mary Tiernan

self

Austin, TX

I am a former public school teacher and the mother of two, current, public education students. While I applaud the House's proposed increase in the basic allotment, the amount is woefully inadequate. I understand that the basic allotment has not been increased since 2019, and I know how all of our family's personal expenses (utilities, insurance, food, gas) have skyrocketed due to inflation in that time. The schools my children attend are definitely feeling the pinch. My sons are in classes of 35 students. As a former middle school teacher, I really can't imagine having 35 inquisitive, wiggly 12 year olds in a room at the same time and expecting them to all make measurable academic progress. I would not blame any professional, quality educator from walking away from teaching at this point. If the basic allotment does not increase, my district is talking about making even more cuts that will make the job of educators even harder. I fear that eventually we will not be able to find enough qualified people to teach our children. Please raise the basic allotment by at least \$1430 per student.

Please also change the calculation to enrollment based funding instead of attendance based funding. I know of too many well intentioned, fellow parents who have sent their children to school while sick due to attendance pressure.

We need to FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. The State of Texas has a huge budget surplus. We also have a Rainy Day fund that is maxed out. Let's invest in our future and ensure that the state we leave the next generation is as strong as the one we inherited! Our public schools provide the labor force that keeps the Texas economy strong. It will be money well spent. Our kids are counting on you, and so are ALL of the citizens of Texas.

Victoria Fradette

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent and taxpayer to Houston Independent School District. I implore you to FULLY fund public education in Texas. Vouchers and education savings accounts are not the answer to creating opportunities for ALL children in Texas.

Mindy Le Jeune

Self

Austin, TX

My name is Mindy Le Jeune. I live in Austin, TX. I am a member of Education Austin and teach at Bowie High School in South Austin. I am opposed to HB2. The \$220 increase in the basic allotment per student is insufficient, and the proposed “teacher pay raise” is not sufficient to the growing inflation.

Double the basic allotment from \$6,380 to \$12,000 per student and index it. This will allow school districts to provide proper repairs facilities, meet student need, and not live in a deficit. School districts will be able to provide basic-needs like running clean water or AC/Heat to classroom and schools. In 2017 I taught in a classroom without AC/Heat or running water. The class had to clean their hands and supplies in water buckets, which caused me to contract a flesh-eating bacteria and sent me to emergency surgery. If we raise the student allotment to double, this could be preventable in other classrooms.

Raising the student allotment will allow schools to properly staff their school based on student need. Teachers and Staff will be able to provide individual support to help meet standards. This will take the burden off teacher workload. Adding student allotment will also allow school districts to increase teacher pay. Give every teacher with five or more years experience in Texas a salary that reflects the amount of work they do and their qualifications as professionals. Many teachers work past the school day to complete their daily duties and have extra jobs to make rent. Texas is ranked 30th in the USA for teacher pay. If school districts increase teacher pay, then they will be able to retain teachers and staff and provide proper educational needs.

Two years ago during the previous state legislative session, lawmakers failed to increase the funding allotment or teacher pay despite having a \$32.7 billion budget surplus at their disposal. Please consider properly funding education to ensure Texas has a strong educational system.

Jaime Lopez, Dr.

Triumph Public Schools

McAllen, TX

My name is Dr. Jaime Lopez and I'm on the board of trustees for Triumph Public Schools in San Antonio. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way Triumph Public Schools meets the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. Why should they count for less?

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Best,

Dr. Jaime Lopez

Paul Campbell

self

Houston, TX

Please raise the basic allotment by \$1340 to 2019 levels.

Jennifer Moss
Spring Branch ISD Parent
Houston, TX

To the members of the House Education Committee,

I am the parent of a current student (and two former students) at Memorial High School in Spring Branch ISD and have for several years been a Reading Buddy to second graders at Hollibrook Elementary School in SBISD. I am thrilled to see your efforts to provide more funding to public education with this bill.

I'm particularly encouraged by the increase in the basic allotment. The current basic allotment falls far short of enabling public school districts in Texas to provide a top-notch education to the children of this state. For example, Spring Branch ISD this past year had to make the difficult and devastating decision to eliminate librarians from all SBISD schools due to budget constraints. Can you imagine a SCHOOL with NO LIBRARIAN!?! SBISD has been recognized again and again for its stellar financial management, so the fault does not lie with our district. The fault lies in the funding.

An increase of \$220 to the basic allotment is welcome, but will not go far to cover our significant costs, including, among many others, unfunded mandates and inflation-related budget shortfalls. Please consider an even greater increase to the basic allotment AND/OR an inflation adjustment to the basic allotment formula to protect our public schools from inflation-related increases in costs that are beyond their control.

Adjustments to the basic allotment (and the funding model as a whole) are LONG overdue and critical to the State of Texas meeting its Constitutional obligation to provide a quality education to the children of this state. Having a well-educated workforce and electorate is critical to having a flourishing state. Thank you for taking a step in the right direction.

Sincerely, Jennifer Moss

Priscilla Krieg, Mrs.
self
Nacogdoches, TX

Dear Committee Members,

I understand what it's like working in Texas public schools. I taught in Texas public schools for 33 years, retiring in 2012. I would like to see the basic allotment increased by \$1445 to a total of \$7605 per public school student. Inflation is having a serious impact on everyone ... including public schools. Adding a meager \$220 to the basic allotment is not the way to help our public schools. The allotment needs to be raised substantially.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Rosa Coleman
Self
Laredo, TX

I am opposed to this bill because it will negatively impact public education. The money proposed for this bill will mean less money for public school students who cannot afford a private education. If more students leave public schools, public school teachers will lose their jobs and this will also impact the economy. It is well known that this bill will benefit students who are already attending private schools. This bill will create a tremendous imbalance in the funds available for public school students and the funds available for private schools. For these and many more reasons I am OPPOSED to this bill and the related bill SD 3.

Melissa Konur
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am a parent of 2 children that attend public school. I am the product of the public school system with a graduate degree and full time employment in my field. I am a member of the PTA at 2 schools. I chose to send my kids to public schools. We can do better. Always. With respect to HB2, please raise the basic allotment by at least \$1340, to return to 2019 levels.

Hans VanBrackle

self

Kingwood, TX

I am writing to urge the passage of HB 2 which will facilitate open communication to loved ones as to the availability of State Supported Living Centers as potential living arrangement for their loved ones with special needs. As the parent of a son with special needs with behavioral challenges, we attempted numerous community based living arrangements, all of which ended unsuccessfully. The State Supported Living Center was the only remaining option for us, and the communication, application, approval and placement process was difficult and opaque. That said our son has thrived at the Richmond State Supported Living Center. Please help make all parents, guardians and loved ones aware of this choice and simplify the processes for accessing. Thank you for your consideration.

Gloria Lamkin

Self- retired

Lufkin, TX

Public schools have been a bedrock of American society. Like most institutions they are challenged by changing demographics, social and cultural shifts and budget considerations which is proper and necessary. The Tx Child MH Care Consortium established after the 2018 Santa Fe mass school shootings is an example of such a challenge and response. Even though, sadly, it had not been established in Uvalde in 2022. There has always been school choice in Texas. The difference now is that there are those who wish to privatize the education system and benefit higher income families at the expense of public schools. Most affected will be rural schools who have struggled to provide special needs services, poor communities and parents who need the resources that public schools have to offer. I do not support funneling more funds to private school, charter schools, home schools at the expense of public schools.

jo danielson, Mrs

Jo a danielson

ROUND ROCK, TX

I'm a teacher and a Republican primary voter. Experienced teachers deserve a raise of at least 6000.00 per year. It's time.

Shannan Riemer

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

As a concerned constituent and advocate for Texas public schools, I urge you to support critical improvements to HB 2 that will ensure our schools are properly funded, our teachers are supported, and our students, especially those facing chronic illness, are not unfairly penalized by the current attendance-based funding model.

The existing system, which ties funding to attendance rather than enrollment, disproportionately harms children with chronic illnesses and disabilities. These students, who already face immense challenges, are further punished when schools lose funding due to unavoidable absences. Texas must move to an enrollment-based funding model so that all students receive the resources they need, regardless of health circumstances.

To truly invest in the future of Texas public education, I urge you to:

- Increase the basic allotment by \$1,340 to \$7,500 per pupil
- Index the basic allotment to inflation so school funding keeps pace with rising costs
- Roll teacher funding into the basic allotment to provide stable and predictable support
- Ensure the Teacher Incentive Allotment is additional funding, not a replacement for teacher salaries
- Move from attendance-based to enrollment-based funding so all students, including those with chronic illnesses, are supported
- Fully fund all existing and future mandates so districts aren't forced to cut essential services
- Reject vouchers in any form, which siphon funds away from public schools

Texas students deserve a fully funded, equitable public education system that meets their needs. Please strengthen HB 2 to reflect these priorities. Thank you for your time and commitment to our schools.

Sincerely,

Shannan Riemer

512-762-9205

Austin, Texas

Austin ISD

Rebecca Forrester

Self

Cat Spring, TX

I am opposed to HB 2. Increase the basic allotment to public schools! Stop punishing public schools when the appraisal district fails the comptrollers valuation study. No public dollars to private vendors!

Karen McKenzie, Educator

Self

Fort Worth, TX

If vouchers occur everyone whether they're an ISD, Charter, Homeschool, our private school need to get the same amount of funding from the state. Because private schools in charter schools don't have to take special ed students there will be a significant disadvantage towards the special ed students because they have no other school to attend. Looking at the situation it appears that the voucher system will destroy the ISD. I have voiced for years that the state money that is given to ISD's needs to be overseen closely. ISD's do not spend the money as intended nor are they good Stewart's of the money. This will be found in Charter schools as well with time. Any money the state gives out to education must be audited to make sure that money is spent on what it is supposed to go to. For example so many times principles are looking for places to spend 34 and \$500,000 for their school the last six days of school. That money was to be spent on the students That are going to the next grade but they saved it just in case and now they're desperately looking for things that teachers can think of that they can buy. This is outrageous

Annette Wills, Retired - Concerned Grandmother

Self

Weatherford, TX

Schools need more than \$220 for the Basic Allotment. Texas' per-student funding is below the National average by more than \$4000 and is ranked 43rd in the Nation. Texas is the 8th largest economy in the world. Texas needs to support their schools better. This is shameful. And no more money for Charter School facilities. Stop the expansion.

Leslie Milford

Self

Levelland, TX

As a lifelong educator, I want to express my thoughts on HB2 and the potential detrimental effects this bill will have on public schools and educators.

The student allotment has remained static since 2019, yet the financial demands of delivering quality education have intensified significantly post-COVID-19. The current funding crisis is compelling educators to personally underwrite essential supplies and materials, which is unsustainable and detrimental to the integrity of public education.

Another area of great concern is how educators are compensated. Since 2019, there has been no systematic raise for educators, preserving a compensation structure that does not reflect the profession's value. For instance, the TEA Minimum Pay Schedule indicates that a veteran educator with over 20 years of experience caps out at \$54,540. The minimum pay schedule creates two critical issues: first, it restricts salary progression for experienced educators unless districts can provide supplemental compensation, and second, it implies that long-serving educators are not entitled to merit-based salary increases. Given educators' crucial role in shaping the future workforce, such compensation is not commensurate with their contributions and responsibilities. Overall, the last two legislative sessions have demonstrated a persistent failure to address the challenges facing our educational system adequately. Please help change this for your constituents, educators, and students. Support Public Education by increasing the student allotment and raising educator compensation to reflect their experience and qualifications.

Jan Lance

self

Austin, TX

The current School Finance bill calls for a \$220 increase in per student funding, which is not even enough to make up for inflation. Our public schools need at least a \$1340 increase just to keep up with inflation. Please do your constitutionally mandated duty and adequately fund public schools to benefit all Texas children.

Candace Vielma

None-just an employee for a school district

Lantana, TX

We are hurting in school districts. We don't have the funds to staff people

In special education. We are having a tsunami amount of referrals, little people to do the evaluations, little people to do interventions (and qualified with the correct science of reading training), and little people that want to continue in this career.

Phuong Carter

self - former public school teacher

Killeen, TX

As a former public school teacher and parent to a teenager in public school, I know that funding our schools is of utmost important. \$220 is not enough, I'm advocating for \$1300 per student to at least get our students on an even playing field. Teachers spend countless hours at personal expense to educate our youths, facing burnout. Many teachers work more than one job to make ends meet, we can not continue to expect our teachers to work for "free" on their free time or continue to buy educational resources for their students. We as a state must value Education over Sports, we need to show that by providing the best education possible and raising teacher salaries so they want to stay in the classroom. Please increase the student funding to \$1300 per student.

Brenda Giles

Carthage ISD School Board Member

Carthage, TX

As you meet this morning, I am volunteering in a 5th Grade Classroom of students making argumentative analysis of controversial subjects concerning school policies or procedures which require minds to analyze both pro & con. As you do the same with HB 2, I sincerely hope you consider to the fullest extent all 148 pages and its ramification to rural and metropolitan areas. This is setting the stage funding districts in an equitable way, yet like and equal are two separate things. Increase in the basic allotment is not enough to address the overwhelming needs and inflationary cost. Our rural area will not lose many students, and the allocation given for ADA will not help my district. The increases the bill makes for the small and midsized schools be advantageous though.

All of this could be solved if funding were balanced with the same amount given for both private and public educational entities alike. The misnomer "SCHOOL CHOICE" has not been explained to the public so when placed on a ballot, of course, voters know choice is paramount. What you are creating is another bureaucracy to oversee which already is aware that private schools do not have to take the challenges which our public schools face.

School Districts have cut teachers to fund programs which the state has mandated and hired more administrators to comply with edicts. I love the metaphor, "Compliance is a parasite." Think carefully as you analyze all aspects of HB 2. Filling the classrooms with capable teachers is the key. Do not continue to compare teachers, classrooms, schools, regions, etc...It has done damage as we have gone against the etymology of the word EDUCATION. Stop pushing down the confusing concepts and start pulling from the roots of knowledge which grows with each grade level.

I come from a family of educators... my Father gave 37 years as Teacher and Superintendent in 3 districts, my Mother retired after 50 years. I was in public ed for 37 years and my daughter has given 20 years and now we serve on 2 East Texas School Boards. As we serve we continue to base so much of our decisions on what is happening as Committees like yours considers the future. May we all see the long term effects with each decision. In the word life are 2 letters...IF and I pray you recognize what will happen to all schools, large or small, rich or poor!

Jonathan Adams

Self

Martinsville, TX

I am a board member at a rural school with 320 students Pre K-12, a parent of two public school students and the spouse of a 23 year professional educator. To say that I have been disappointed in the State of Texas regarding school finance would be an understatement. I do not agree with vouchers, but the bigger problem is the lack of support for public schools. Vouchers would not even be a topic if public schools were funded like they should be. Vouchers are a pet project for a few elites and is perceived as a "one size fits all" proposition to fix problems at a few schools when one size does not, in fact, fit all in our state. In the 2023 session, the State bragged about a record budget surplus, yet nothing was done for schools. Every session that the State does not increase funding makes it harder and harder to catch up. To have the 8th largest economy in the world but rank so low among the other 49 states in school funding and teacher pay is laughable. The minimum starting salary for a teacher in Texas is \$33,630. After 20 years, a teacher tops out at \$54,540. Most schools pay above that minimum scale, but our school can only afford to pay \$4,500 over the state base. Teaching requires a Bachelors degree and a state certification, but with only a minimum scale, schools are prevented from attracting the best and brightest to become teachers. A poverty level wage combined with the mediocre retirement, substandard health insurance, high expectations, discipline problems, lack of parent involvement, state-mandated rules and regulations makes the job not worth the compensation to many college graduates. Schools are left with either non-certified teachers or teachers who jump from district to district looking for easier positions. Those who feel it is their calling to teach and would still teach no matter what the working conditions are will be the ones who persevere through and always do a great job. Competitive wages help to cull those who treat the profession like just another job. Imagine what Texas public schools could become if teaching became a desirable career and there was actually competition for teaching jobs. It could bring the best and brightest teachers into our schools and having the best and brightest is what it will take to improve student outcomes. My wife works very closely with SFA and their teacher recruiting programs. She has seen firsthand how many bright and talented people are in STEM programs at SFA but will not teach because it is just not worth it. Everybody in the House and Senate knows that state funding has not kept up with inflation and you all are aware that along with not increasing funding you have enacted unfunded mandates. Rural schools are hurting and the State is to blame. Our school runs on a shoestring budget and must stretch every dollar as far as it will go. It is beyond time for legislators to do the right thing and do what is best for all students. Thank you for your time.

Larry Toenjes

Self, retired economist

Clear Lake Shores, TX

Rationale for and calculation of additional compensatory education grants for low-income students attending high-poverty schools

1. The most significant factor in determining how well Texas schools perform on STAAR exams is the percentage of attending students who are eligible for the federal Free or Reduced Price (FRPL) program.
2. Using the percentages of students in schools who achieve the Meets Grade Level (MGL) standard the average results for all grades, all subjects, in regular (ISD) elementary and middle schools, for 2023-2024 school are:
 - a. FRPL students: 35%
 - b. Non-FRPL students: 63%
3. Since 1995 the percentage of FRPL students has grown from 45% to 62%.
4. Texas public school enrollments grew from 3.67 million in 1995 to 5.50 million in 2023. 94% OF THE GROWTH WAS DUE TO INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF FRPL STUDENTS.
5. Given the difference between the MGL success rates for FRPL and non-FRPL students, this growth in the number and percentage of FRPL students has presented Texas schools with an enormous challenge.
6. The problem is amplified because the MGL success rates for each type of student—FRPL or non-FRPL—decrease as those students are enrolled in schools with higher percentages of FRPL students. (see http://polinetworks.com/TEADTA_2024/index.htm .)
7. These facts point to a glaring inadequacy in the state funding formula:
 - a. The formula provides a fixed grant of approximately \$1,700 for each FRPL student.
 - b. This fixed-level grant completely ignores the above fact that the risk of failure of a FRPL student increases substantially for such students enrolled in schools with increasingly greater percentages of FRPL students.
 - c. The formula also ignores the substantial negative impact on non-FRPL students enrolled in schools with greater percentages of FRPL students.
8. The above facts—high and growing percentages of FRPL students, the large difference in performance between FRPL and other students, and the negative impact on both groups of students when enrolled in schools with high percentages of such students—provide a strong argument for:
 - a. Increasing substantially funds devoted to compensatory education grants;
 - b. Targeting the increased compensatory education dollars to schools with FRPL student percentages above perhaps 50 percent;
 - c. Establishing weights so that larger grants per FRPL student go to students in schools with higher percentages of such students. For example, the new add-on weight could be set as the ratio of (a) the average percent of FRPL students for a school to (b) the statewide average. A floor, say 1.1, would ensure a significant amount.
9. Question: Money? Answer: School property tax recapture payments. If the recapture payments, about \$2.9 billion, were used to increase compensatory education grants the result would be a 55 percent increase--\$5.3 billion to \$8.2 billion. Recapture amounts are school district taxes. They should be targeted to the most pressing problem in Texas public education.

Amanda Tillman

Self

San Antonio, TX

Members of the committee,

I come before you today as a high school educator of 12 years from San Antonio, Texas, committed to student success, teacher excellence, and continuous professional development. Despite achieving exceptional T-TESS scores—14 Distinguished and 3 Accomplished, with ever-upward-trending student improvement from unbiased data, placing me among the highest-scoring teachers on my campus—I find myself excluded from accessing TIA designation due to district limitations on eligible subjects and grade levels. But the NEISD Director of Recruit & Retention, while lobbying for our district TIA designation system to get approved, also started our district's 1st NBCT Cohort as a second in-district means to TIA Designation. I was 1-of-8 teachers picked from hundreds of applications for this first cohort. I have invested hundreds of dollars and hours into being an NBCT Candidate, with a future certification date of Dec 2025, and already agreed to mentor our successive in-district cohorts.

As a school TIA Representative/Ambassador, and a conference presenter on “Distinguishing” Teacher Portfolios in T-TESS, I have trained teachers in how to reach TIA designation through their T-TESS, even though I am personally ineligible. This has only deepened my understanding of the demanding nature of TIA and further reinforced how National Board Certification (NBCT) is even more rigorous. NBCT requires teachers to engage in a recursive, reflective process of professional growth, and in-depth evidence of ongoing student growth, with recertification every five years, ensuring that educators continue to meet the highest standards of excellence—matching the five-year recertification requirement through the T-TESS to TIA pathway.

While NBCT teachers represent 0.3% of the educator workforce, Texas has had fewer years of NBCT-focused offerings than most of the US. However, our state has made significant strides in increasing the number of NBCT-certified teachers. In the last five years, Texas has moved from being ranked 42nd to 6th in the nation for NBCT teachers, reflecting the growing recognition of this certification's value. The states around Texas already offer \$10,000 annual stipends to incentivize NBCT-certified educators to relocate from Texas to join their workforce, recognizing the rigor and impact of this certification.

Retaining NBCT as a verified path to TIA would not only recognize the rigor of this certification but also ensure fairness for teachers who have demonstrated consistent, measurable excellence in their profession despite designation ineligibility within their current district TIA setup (as myself, and many of my colleagues find ourselves currently). I urge you to keep NBCT in the HB-2 bill as an accessible pathway for teachers seeking to receive TIA designation, at least at the recognized (if not a MUCH higher) level.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Donegan, Dr.

Self

Austin, TX

Please raise the basic school allotment by at least \$1300. The basic allotment has not been increased since 2019 and are still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite additional expensive mandates and double digit inflation. Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. Raising the basic allotment gives our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve AND it gives districts the opportunity to money to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage.

Pat Ridlehuber

Self

Woodway, TX

I will support anyone in your district opposing you if you vote for vouchers.

Support Public Education

Karen Santhanam

Self

Cedar Park, TX

I am opposed to House Bill HB2. This bill proposes a small increase of \$220 per student, but this comes nowhere close to the over \$1,300 increase needed just to catch up with the 2019 costs with inflation.

My grandparents, parents, myself and my children are all proud products of public schools. Our schools make us a better community and strong country.

Our public schools are facing a devastating shortfall, induced by the TX legislature's lack of funding, resulting in cuts to critical staff and programs.

I can't think of a better investment than the education of the children of our great state, funding our future leaders and creating a dynamic workforce that makes Texas attractive to businesses.

Please vote NO on HB2!

Krista Reed

Self

Texas City, TX

This bill should contain provisions to significantly increase the minimum salary schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000 to help shrink the pay gap between rural & larger districts. Also measures should be included to ensure all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise. All educators with five or more years of experience should be ensured of at least a \$3,000 raise & those with nine or more years should be ensured of at least \$6,000. These salary increases should be funded through increases to the small/mid-size allotment & basic allotment. Furthermore the threshold of 30% of any increase to the basic allotment should be raised to 40% to fund educator pay increases including increases for paraprofessionals.

Angela Groves

Self, Educator

Fort Worth, TX

THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION

Sec. 1. SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.

Ann Teich
Self- retired public school educator
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I am a retired Texas public school educator (34 years) and a former school board member.

I am contacting you to urge you to raise Texas public schools base funding per student to \$1,300 per student in HB2. Analyses from both Raise Your Hand, Texas and Fund Schools First (a North Texas school district/business coalition) reveal that in real dollars, Texas public schools have \$10 billion less to work with in 2025 than they had in 2019. With no increases in funding in the 2021 and 2023 legislative sessions, and the end of federal COVID and ESSER funding that filled some gaps, many Texas school districts are operating in the red, having to close schools, cut programs and put teacher pay raises on hold.

As a former public school educator and someone with grandchildren in Texas public schools, I am deeply concerned that our public schools continue to be shortchanged. A budget is a moral document. The amount of per pupil funding currently being proposed in HB2 speaks volumes about how little our students and the staff who serve them are valued.

Please raise the per pupil funding to \$1,300 in HB2. That is the morally right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Ann Hardeman Teich

Angela Groves
self , Educator
Fort Worth, TX
oppose

Sharyn Reynolds, Rev.
Sef-Retired
Austin, TX

I find it outrageous that in a state as rich as Texas, this committee considers it acceptable to propose grossly underfunding our per student allotments leaving us in 42nd or 43rd place nationally. After having withheld needed funds for the past 5 years and failing to even keep up with inflation, I call on this committee to authorize at least a \$1,300 per student increase to bring us back to 2019 levels and help Texas schools climb out of the budget crisis the legislature has created. I implore you to make your priority the children, parents, ISD's, and communities of Texas, all of which depend on effective public education to grow our economy and strengthen the lives of individual students..

John Taylor
Henderson ISD school board member
Henderson, TX

As a school board member at Henderson ISD, I am concerned of the impact school vouchers will have on our public schools. I am certain though that the School Voucher bill will pass in this legislative session. My hope is that the legislature will pass a Public School Bill separate from the School Voucher Bill that will provide our public schools with appropriate funding that can truly change our dire situation. We not only need funding for safety and disciplinary measures, pay raises for our educators, we need increased cost allocation per student that can truly make a difference. Since the student allocation has not increased for the past six years, the proposed \$220 increase is essentially just a temporary measure. I would hope that this allocation would substantially increase. So many Texas school districts are operating at a budget deficit, appropriate funding should be awarded to our schools. Many schools need funding increases to help pay the everyday expenses that face our schools. I respectfully ask that you reward our public schools with an amount of funding that can truly make a difference. I appreciate your time and listening to the real concerns that I have for our public schools.

Phyllis Dominguez, Retired public school teacher
Self
El Paso, TX

Texas needs to financially support their public school educators. The pay doesn't reflect the hours teachers dedicate to their jobs and the money spent out of pocket for supplies and incentives for students. After teaching for 32 years, it would be a blessing for today's teachers to be rewarded for their efforts.

Bianca Mendoza
Futuro
San Antonio, TX

My name is Bianca and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Tammie Marberry, Dr.

Self

Hardin, TX

- School Districts all over the state are suffering with huge budget deficits because of the state underfunding schools since 2019. With no increases for inflation, \$10 billion has been cut over the past six years. Houston has a \$250 million deficit, Austin \$120 million, Dallas \$160 million.
 - Governor Abbot and Mike Morath are saying that schools have the most money they've ever had. That's false. They're using numbers from two years ago that include extra federal funding that came during COVID. That funding is long gone. And there's a good chance that federal funding that Texas schools depend on will shrink over the next several years.
 - The truth is that school districts are \$1,300 per student behind where they were in 2019 in real dollars.
 - The legislature has the money to bring our schools back to the level of funding in 2019, which was considered adequate. You need to fund \$1,300 per student in order to get to this point.
- Adding the funding to the basic allotment would be the most fair solution across all school districts, rather than telling districts how to use the funding. Different districts have different needs.
- The current funding bill (HB2) has an increase of \$220 per student. While better than nothing, it does not even come close to keeping up with inflation. School districts will continue to fall further behind.

Please adequately fund public schools and respect those of us who have spent our entire lives supporting all Texas students!

Madeline Steubing

Self

Devine, TX

Please vote no on HB2. Release the strings currently holding public schools back. This bill doesn't equally fund charter and public schools. Charters also have less regulation. Public education should be funded equally and same mandates.

We've asked less government, and this adds more government. Merit based teacher funding failed in Dallas schools in 2014ish. The TIA is a lottery scam. Teachers work so hard to create appealing lessons for their students and have willingly collected and analyzed data that's not beneficial for the classroom- but the elected require it. Merit pay adds even more stings. You already have districts dangling over HB1605- bluebonnet and "new curricula review" and like that bill, HB2 limits options for teachers!

Vote NO on HB1-2-3-4. Please represent your district and not the funders. The people will not allow this unfair treatment.

Laurie Stephens

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I am the parent of two grandchildren now enrolled in public school. I volunteer at their school and also take substitute teaching assignments. I have always valued public education as my parents, in laws and grandmother were all public school educators. There is nothing more important than investing in our children's future. I urge you to increase school funding to give our teachers the support and salaries they deserve. I see first hand what an important job they do every day. The children of Texas deserve your support through increased funding. Thank you

Laurie Stephens

The Woodlands

Andra Villegas

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

We need more than \$220.00 for the allotment. No, No, No more money for Charter schools.

Heather Byrd

self / middle school teacher

Round Rock, TX

As a voter, parent of a public school student, and public school educator, I firmly believe that public school educators need to be paid on par with other professionals with similar education requirements. Raises for teachers should be provided through the basic allotment to ensure that ALL teachers are more appropriately paid. TIA, if kept, should not be used to correct the current underpayment of teachers. To bring Texas education back to the top in the nation, teachers with 10 years or more experience should receive a minimum increase of \$7,500 and teachers with 20 or more years experience should receive a minimum increase of \$10,000. Starting pay for new teachers should be a minimum of \$50,000. In the last several years, I have witnessed many veteran teachers leaving the industry due to frustration with low pay despite decades of service. These experienced teachers had to work additional jobs just to make ends meet with a modest home and car. They could not support a family in a way appropriate that a college-degreed individual should. In addition, level of pay has a direct effect on the quality of teacher. Top pay will attract top talent. Teachers have THE MOST IMPORTANT job in the world; without teachers, no other professions are possible. They should be paid in accordance.

Elaina Garcia

Self

Cypress, TX

Texas public schools are struggling to recover from the pandemic, which resulted in the need for additional funding to combat learning loss and provide wrap-around services. Schools are also grappling with unprecedented staffing shortages.

Vouchers have been shown to decrease, not increase, student academic achievement.

Despite claims that school voucher programs lead to gains in student success, there has been no credible research to suggest that vouchers improve academic performance. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, an independent, nonpartisan policy institute, the use of school vouchers is equivalent to missing out on more than one-third of a year of classroom learning.

Vouchers allow public funds to be spent without any accountability.

Texas public schools are held to rigorous accountability standards, so lawmakers should not allow public, taxpayer dollars to be spent at private or religious schools that do not have to meet the same standards. Private schools do not have to report student achievement data to the state, and they do not have to meet the same standards for hiring teachers.

Vouchers could be expensive to the state.

Depending on the limitations set in the specific voucher legislation, hundreds of thousands of students who are currently attending private schools or being home-schooled could begin to receive vouchers, requiring the state to spend much more on education than it does now.

The amount of a voucher would not be enough to cover tuition at most private schools.

The amount of a voucher would not be enough to cover tuition at most private schools. Only more affluent families with the means to pay the balance of their children's tuition would truly benefit. This would leave the very children vouchers are supposed to help left behind in schools with even less funding than before.

Most Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged.

Six out of 10 Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged, and economically disadvantaged students are the ones who would most likely be left behind in underfunded public schools should a voucher program be established.

Historically, economically disadvantaged are more expensive to educate than more affluent students because they don't have as many external educational opportunities. Also, districts often provide them with more services. Schools need more, not less, money to educate these students.

Private schools are not an option for most students.

Private schools do not exist in every part of Texas, especially in rural areas. If a voucher program is created, fly-by-night private schools could pop up across the state, offering "choice" while profiting from public tax dollars.

School choice is already offered in Texas.

School choice is already offered in Texas in such a way that preserves accountability and local control. Many districts offer

multiple school options through magnets, academies, and transfers.

Jacinda McElhannon

Self / editor

Heartland, TX

I'm contacting you regarding the Education Committee hearing for House Bill 3 on Tuesday. As a homeschooler and potentially a future homeschool parent (when my children reach school age), I value freedom from government strings and regulations in private education, and am against the expansion of government in the name of "parental empowerment." I would like to ask our representatives to please join a large constituency of homeschoolers in opposing "school choice" legislation like HB 3. Thank you.

Vince Jackson, Mr.

self teacher 3rd grade

Fort Worth, TX

I am a third grade teacher in the Fort Wort area. I have seen first hand how much my school district has struggled with no adjustments for inflation to the allotment. Texas's students deserve to at least have the same funding as 2019. That would mean an increase of 1300\$ to the per pupil funding. The testimonies by the experts yesterday did not convey how critically we need these funds to meet the needs of school children.

Daniel Mello

Self--Retired

Hutto, TX

Yes, we need to increase funding for our public schools. No, we do not need to do private school vouchers. Our funding is limited and we cannot afford to pay the rich to privately school their kids. One strength of our system is that education, for the most part, is equal. This bill will destroy that advantage, making money matter more than native intelligence.

Leslye Roberts, Mrs.

Self/Educator/Parent

Abilene, TX

Appropriate funding for public schools is necessary for the future success of our state and country. While the increase to the basic allotment proposed is a move in the right direction, it is not enough to address inflation and to make up for the lack of funding in recent years. Enrollment based verse attending based funding needs to be included to appropriately fund schools for the expenses that are accrued for daily operation that is determined by enrollment.

Jodi Beasley

self

Leander, TX

My name is Jodi Beasley and I teach 6th grade science in Leander ISD. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and I mentor teachers who are pursuing National Board Certification. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation.

I have been a National Board Certified Teacher since 2009 and have recently renewed my certification. I have learned so much through the process and connected with teachers through the National Board process. It has made me a better teacher and because National Board is based on high standards and not just something you have to "complete" but something you have to pass, it means something. Because of the TIA allotment tied to my certification, the extra money has also allowed me to have more financial freedom, as I used to work an additional job to supplement my teacher income - because of National Board, I don't have to.

National Board Certification has impacted my students for many years. I studied best practices through the process, including family involvement. I led activities with families while going through my certification and it gave me more confidence interacting with parents and the community. I watched hours of film of myself teaching and analyzed my strengths and weakness. This helped me improve student to student discourse in my classroom and my own questioning techniques. Because I am an accomplished teacher, it has given me the confidence to take on leadership roles of both team lead and department lead over the years and I have shared many things I have learned with my colleagues that helps impact their students. I have mentored teachers through the National Board Process as well.

It is important that National Board Certification is a pathway for TIA designation. This is an excellent process with the highest standards and it is something that has been vetted for many years. There aren't many Texas teachers that have gone through the process because they haven't been made aware of it. We are trying to get the word out and educate the public about how much it can impact students and teachers in a positive way. We need to retain teachers and attract new teachers. Having a way to work toward excellence and extra income is very motivating. It can also keep teachers in the classrooms and out of 2nd jobs.

National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to a TIA recognized designation in HB2.

Karina Tamez

self

Spring, TX

My name is Karina Tamez. My son Miguel is 22 years old and has an IQ of 40. He has a life-long history of self-harming and aggressive behaviors at home, school, and community since an early age. So many times, we were desperate for help, but the school never offered residential care or referred me to HHSC to obtain placement at a State Supported Living Center (SSLC). Miguel has a history of property destruction. He gets violent when taken out and begins beating on the window. He also tries to grab us while driving, making driving very unsafe. He has broken windows, doors, walls and furniture at home; at school he broke the school bus window twice. He has also slapped, kicked and head butted his family, school staff and classmates and even hospital staff.

With Miguel's behavior worsening with age, we continued to live in fear. We made the hard choice to seek care at a hospital 3 times in the last year. I asked his LIDDA (The Harris Center) multiple times for an SSLC placement, but they kept denying to make the application.

The Harris Center told me that Miguel needed to try many HCS group homes first, that SSLC would want us to try that and exhaust all options before even considering his application. While Miguel was at the hospital, I informed The Harris Center that I was very scared to bring him home because he hurts himself and others. An Adult Protective Services report was done when I did not take my son home but soon APS realized that it was unsafe to bring him home from the hospital. The Harris Center continued to refuse to make the application to an SSLC for my son. I had no choice but to contact Senator's Creighton's office for help. His staff reached out to HHSC to see why placement at an SSLC would not be possible when he fit the criteria to be admitted. Thanks to Senator Creighton's aide, The Harris Center decided to help me with the application packet and my son was finally admitted to Denton SSLC this last January and he is safe now, receiving the care he needs and having a lot of improvement on his behaviors. If the school had informed me of the existence of the SSLCs, then my son and our family would have been spared the trauma of his life long behaviors. He would have received the treatment needed to address his psychological, medical, and behavioral issues earlier.

Ramon Telles Jr
self - Instructional Designer
Austin, TX

My name is Ramon Telles Jr and I have children in Texas Public Schools, specifically Pond Springs Elementary in Round Rock ISD. I have been volunteering for years and see how important our local schools are for the well- being of my community.

I've been reading in my local paper and talking with teachers about all of the cuts that my local school is having to make because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians. I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars.

Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs. I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Jessica Clingan, Mrs.

All public school students, teachers, and staff

Grandview, TX

Texas public schools are facing a severe funding crisis that has rapidly worsened since 2019. Adjusted for inflation, about \$10,000,000,000 has been cut from public education in the last six years. Currently, 73% of Texas school districts are running budget deficits, leading to staff reductions and program cuts for many districts. Houston ISD alone has lost 5,000 teachers and 9,000 students since 2019. The basic allotment per student has remained stagnant at \$6,160, failing to keep pace with inflation. To keep up with the rising cost of educating students, the allotment should be increased a minimum of \$1300. However, lawmakers have proposed only a \$220 increase, which is insufficient to cover rising costs. Despite a historic \$50 billion surplus, Texas lawmakers have not allocated adequate funds for public education.

The push for voucher programs threatens to worsen this crisis. If implemented, vouchers would divert roughly \$4 billion from public schools to private institutions by 2028. Rural areas, which largely lack private school options, would receive no benefit but would still face funding reductions.

Voucher programs have failed in other states. In Arizona, they led to increased public spending with no benefit for public schools. In Indiana, 90% of voucher recipients were already in private schools. In Florida, voucher expansion strained public school finances. In Wisconsin, there was no significant improvement in student outcomes, while Ohio and Oklahoma's programs were criticized for favoring wealthy families.

Vouchers are unconstitutional under the Texas Constitution, which mandates an efficient, free public school system and prohibits funding sectarian schools. Private schools receiving voucher funds are not held to the same standards as public schools and can discriminate based on performance, disabilities, or socioeconomic status. Taxpayer funds going to these private entities is unethical.

Vouchers are also likely to harm the Texas economy. With half of the state's workforce employed in public education, budget cuts could lead to widespread job losses. A well-funded public education system is essential for workforce development, and weakening it would likely harm Texas's long-term economic growth.

The voucher push is driven by corporate interests, including billionaires like Jeff Yass, who profits from privatizing education through investments in private schools and EdTech. Yass has donated \$12 million to Gov. Greg Abbott, influencing Texas education policy. The Texas Constitution guarantees that "the privilege of free suffrage shall be supported by laws regulating elections, and prohibiting, under adequate penalties, all undue influence."

Do the right thing. VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS! FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

Joan Brown

Parent/child affected

Fort Worth, TX

I am a parent of a very disabled son who currently lives at Denton SSLC. I am requesting that the language in section 3.10 in House Bill 2 be kept the same.

Our previous LIDDA (MetroCare) did not inform us that a SSLC was an option when we're in a dire and dangerous situation. After we did find out a SSLC was available our LIDDA drag out the process for 6 months.

Our son is finally in Denton SSLC and we love it. We know that he is in a safe environment.

Respectfully,

Joan Brown

Cindy Howes

self

Gary, TX

No more money to Public schools, they are failing the children. The money should follow the child with NO government oversight. The government is overseeing public schools and TX is at the bottom. The parent chooses a school and the \$ going to that school. No school certification, no certified tests. Home schooled children have been doing this for years and they perform much better than public school kids.

David Molina

NYOS Charter School

Austin, TX

My name is Dr. David Molina and I'm the Vice-Chair of the board of trustees for NYOS Charter School in Austin Tx. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way that NYOS meets the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. Why should they count for less?

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

--

Arden Decker

Self

Houston, TX

Dear House Committee,

I write to day in support of increased funding to the Texas public education system. As a native Texan, current resident, and educator, I understand the critical role that public schools play for our children and larger social fabric. HB 2 is not doing enough to support our students, teachers, and schools. The basic allotment should be raised by \$1340 at minimum, even if this only gets the rate back to 2019 levels. This funding is critical to our State and its tax payers want to see more, not less, funding invested in public education.

Karen Wyatt

self/ education

Booker, TX

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and Basic Allotment. Expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above. As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I would support a 40% increase.

Jesse Daly
Self
AUSTIN, TX

I am providing comments with respect to the current proposal regarding public education funding. I am opposed to the introduction of education savings accounts (ESA) in Texas and implore the House to vote against any such proposal currently under consideration.

In 2021, my wife and I made the choice to move our family from Missouri to Texas in large part due to the quality of Texas public schools. In Missouri, our children were enrolled in a French immersion charter school; one of the top performing schools in the state. We were selected via lottery to be able to enroll in the school and our children had a good experience while attending this charter school. So, we are familiar with school choice in some sense. And we made our choice. You could say we are Missourians by birth and Texans by choice. We are proud to be here and our choice has been absolutely the right decision from day one. Our children have flourished here and we continue to be impressed by the quality of the educational opportunities here in Texas, along with the parental and teacher support. We believe they will continue to flourish in the current public education system provided the state of Texas adequately funds public schools.

Therefore, we believe the current proposal to introduce ESAs is flawed and should be rejected for the following reasons:

- 1) There is limited oversight of the schools operating outside the current public school system who would be the beneficiaries of the ESA program. Additionally, public education is available to all children while private schools can choose which students to accept.
- 2) The ESA model negatively impacts rural school districts where existing public schools are critical to students' development and educational attainment in addition to being central to the local economy.
- 3) The preponderance of research in this area over the past decade on traditional vouchers strongly suggests they actually lower academic achievement according to the Brookings Institution.
- 4) Studies into a similar program in Arizona found that a disproportionate share of program beneficiaries appeared to be affluent.
- 5) Several studies have shown that both high exit rates from private schools funded with vouchers and/or ESA, as well as higher educational attainment upon returning to a traditional public school.

Our public schools here in Texas work. They need our continued support. Please reject the current proposal to introduce education savings accounts in Texas. Thank you for your consideration.

Lauren LaRocca

Self

Richardson, TX

Texas House Bill 2 will significantly benefit Richardson Independent School District (RISD) by providing critical funding and policy improvements that enhance student success, improve teacher retention, and strengthen the overall quality of education.

Increasing the Basic Allotment (BA) from \$6,160 to \$6,380 per student will provide RISD, which serves over 37,000 students, with additional funding for instructional resources, technology, and academic support. The mandate that 40% of this increase be used for staff salary raises will help retain high-quality teachers and reduce turnover.

HB 2 also allocates \$1.8 billion for special education, including intensity-based funding and a \$1,000-per-initial-special-education-evaluation allotment. This ensures RISD students with special needs receive timely assessments and adequate support services.

The requirement that foundation curriculum courses be taught by certified teachers strengthens education quality. Prohibiting the use of “Districts of Innovation” exemptions for hiring uncertified teachers ensures RISD students receive instruction from qualified educators.

Additionally, \$1.5 billion in grants will expand Pre-K, fine arts, and career readiness programs. For RISD, this means greater access to early childhood education, enhanced arts programs, and stronger career counseling, equipping students with critical skills for their futures.

The bill also provides \$750 million for increased teacher compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), rewarding high-performing educators and incentivizing teaching excellence.

Finally, additional state aid for property and casualty insurance costs will relieve financial strain on RISD, allowing more funds to be directed toward student programs and classroom resources.

HB 2 is a vital investment in public education, directly benefiting RISD students, teachers, and families. It ensures sustainable funding, supports teacher retention, enhances student programs, and strengthens the district’s ability to provide high-quality education. Texas lawmakers should pass HB 2 to secure the future of education in RISD and across the state.

Ana Sanchez

Pine shadows elementary

Houston, TX

Please help public schools

Sara Reeves
Self
Round Rock, TX

HB 2 is Not Enough, HB 1257 is Better
Thank you for serving the people of Texas on the House Public Education Committee.

The House public education finance bill (HB 2) is not enough. It falls well short of the increase those closest to the work (school administrators, education advocates, and parents) have been asking for. Though it recognizes the need for change, such as increasing the per-student basic allotment and expanding teacher incentives, the proposed \$220 increase per student is far too low. To keep up with inflation and ensure quality education, schools need at least a \$1,340 increase per student.

The allotment increase in HB 2 will not properly cover the following critical investments.
All teachers and staff at our public schools deserve substantial pay increases. Raises and retention bonuses will also help us attract and keep qualified educators.
Students with special needs and those most vulnerable need more dedicated funding. Funding for special education, bilingual programs, and for students from families with low income. These supports include mental health and counseling as well.
Public schools desperately need infrastructure investments for classroom expansions, HVAC systems, safety measures, and more. However, my understanding is that HB 2 will actually provide more infrastructure funding for charter schools than our public schools. This is unacceptable.

We need to substantially increase the per-student allotment to properly fund these priorities. We also need to tie that allotment to enrollment and inflation. Luckily, another bill, HB 1257, includes all of this and more.

Under HB 1257, the basic allotment per student would increase to \$8,947, and raising the basic allotment would ripple across school finance in powerful ways:

Educator Pay: State law requires a percentage of allotment increases to boost salaries, lifting compensation for teachers, certified staff, and support staff.

Program Funding: Allotments for special education, bilingual education, and career and technical education are tied to the basic allotment, meaning these programs would see automatic increases.

Operational Costs: With most school budgets going toward staff salaries, a higher allotment would help districts manage rising inflation and operational expenses - investing in critical infrastructure.

I urge the members of this committee to pass HB 1257 or to incorporate the language of that bill into HB 2.

Gerald Hurtig
Self
Little Elm, TX

Thanks for letting me share my thoughts on this proposed bill. It's great that you're considering increasing compensation for our educators. After reading the summary, I noticed that Dyslexia Therapists aren't included in the compensation increases. I know it might be assumed, but unfortunately, they're not usually considered Diagnosticians or Classroom Teachers, so they wouldn't be covered under this bill. This job title requires a special two-year training and certification, and these specialists work daily with children with special needs to meet their needs. They've missed out on compensation and special increases in the past, and it would be a huge disservice to them if they were excluded. For example, Prosper ISD doesn't recognize their compensation at the same level as Diagnosticians, even though their job requirements are similar. I strongly believe that you should add the necessary language to include this specific job title in the bill. I'm confident that school districts will exclude them otherwise.

Nikki Anderson
Self
Wylie, TX

I do not support this school voucher scam. We have billionaires trying to ruin our public education. Devos lives in Michigan and is already wealthy. She has no business in TX business. Properly fund our schools

Kim Hare, Mrs.

ATPE

Dublin, TX

I'm a special education teacher with 30 years experience working in a Title 1 school in a small rural school district. My school district does not participate in the Teacher Insensitive Allotment. I am very hopeful the legislature will vote for a significant raise for rural teachers and hopefully raises for support staff as well, separate and apart from the TIA. Your efforts in this matter are appreciated.

Julia Mccomas

Self

Spicewood, TX

Texas must increase the starting salary to get young people to choose this career for the future of our children and the state to \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Texas needs to ensure all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians receive a raise. To ensure we keep our most experienced teachers that will mentor the new teacher Texas must for once increase the salary for those with 10 or more years of experience significantly by 6,000 or more.

Cynthia Scott

Self HS Teacher

Bay City, TX

As a HS English/ELL teacher with over 20 years of experience, I'm writing to support the proposed teacher pay raises outlined in HB 2. The only amendment I would suggest is a guaranteed raise for beginning teachers as my son is about to finish his first year and plans to continue to teach, but he seems to be in a non-guaranteed pay rate.

R F

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Riley, and I'm 9 years old. I'm a third grade student in Austin ISD, and I have dyslexia. I am considered twice-exceptional. I have scores and abilities beyond my grade level or the average, but districts need more funding so students like me can be more than just average—or worse, fall behind because dyslexia programs are scarce and expensive.

Learning to read is really tough for me and I notice I don't read as well as some of my friends. I love reading. Even though I try my hardest every day, it's still hard. I love my school and my teachers who help me. I want my teachers and reading instructor to be paid what they are worth and I want my school district to be able to afford to teach all kids to read.

I'm pretty good at math already but I don't know the numbers that will help my teachers and my friends but I know \$220 is not a lot of money and my mom tells me we need at least \$1300.

I hope you increase the basic allotment for schools, give teachers raises, and give more money to special education. Schools need more money to help kids like me and my friends who need extra support. I don't want to just get by—I deserve the chance to be great, not just average. Without more funding, it's hard for us to get what we need.

My mom helped me write my testimony but I told her what I want to say. I have made testimony before to our SHAC (Student Health Advisory Committee) and to our school board. I love public speaking but I have the flu and I won't be able to make it to the Capitol tomorrow.

Please do what's right and give public schools the money they need to help kids like me and my friends be successful. We deserve it. Oh and I'm tired of my mom being mad about schools not getting the money they need. So please help with that. Thanks,
Riley

H H

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is H.H., and I attended Austin ISD from pre-K through 12th grade. I graduated from Bowie High School in 2024 and now attend college in Texas, where I participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. I love college, but it is extremely hard for me. I have dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities that were never properly remediated during my time in Austin ISD.

My mom fought so hard for me for so many years, but when students do not get the help they need to be on grade level, schools do not have the resources to catch them up. Too often, students are just passed along without being truly college, career, or life ready. I am smart. I am capable. I have a better-than-average IQ and a strong desire to learn. But I did not receive the support I needed to be successful.

Schools do not have adequate dyslexia (and other) programs in secondary schools because of a lack of funding. That needs to change. Please increase the basic allotment to at least \$1,300 per student so Texas kids can get the support they need to succeed. I am working to obtain a degree so I can help students with disabilities get the help I never could.

Texas students deserve better. Please fund our public schools.

Thank you.

Lance Smith

Self

Hockley, TX

Please find a way to fix the system for hiring retire rehire teachers. There is obviously a teacher shortage especially in certain areas like special education. I am a retire rehire special education teacher in Katy ISD. I was told last week I could not return because Katy ISD is no longer employing retire rehire teachers because of budget cuts. When I retired in 2021, I did because TRS told me I could return after 1 school year but I may have to pay the surcharge or negotiate with the district on who paid the surcharge. But I would definitely be able to find a job. The very next month legislation passed that required school districts to pay the entire surcharge to TRS. That one decision has caused almost all school districts in Texas to pass on hiring qualified retired teachers and filling spots with unqualified and even uncertified teachers. It makes absolutely no sense with this teacher shortage to make it harder for districts to hire qualified experienced teachers that will benefit the students. The legislature can either fund districts more targeted at retire rehire or work with TRS to let them take money out of the employees salary, or even return it to its previous status and let districts negotiate the surcharge with the employee. There are thousands of retired teachers that are still available to help fill the shortage but unable to because of a legislature that does not know or does not care about how to provide the best education possible for our students. Please call me at (713) 857-6847, I would love an opportunity to speak before the House about retire rehire as well as special education. Thank you for your time.

B F

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Berkeley, and I'm a middle school student in an academy program in Austin ISD. I'm twice exceptional, and I love math, writing, and history. I love my school and my teachers, and I want them to have the resources (MONEY) they need—and to be paid what they deserve.

A \$220 increase to the basic allotment does not get us there. Schools are struggling, teachers are underpaid, and students are missing out on opportunities because there simply isn't enough funding.

Please provide more special education funding and increase the basic allotment by more than \$1,300 per student to support kids like me—the future of Texas.

Thank you.

Clint Guidry

Archer City ISD

Archer City, TX

I urge the committee to prioritize meaningful investments in public education by addressing the following key areas:

1. ****Opposition to Vouchers ("School Choice")**** – Public funds should be dedicated to strengthening our public schools, not diverted to private institutions.
2. ****Competitive Educator Salaries**** – The Minimum Salary Schedule should be significantly increased to ensure that the starting salary for educators is at least \$45,000. This would help reduce pay disparities between small/rural and large/urban districts.
3. ****Targeted Pay Increases for Educators**** –
 - Educators, including teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians, with at least two years of experience should receive a salary increase.
 - Those with five or more years of experience should receive a raise of at least \$3,000.
 - Those with nine or more years of experience should receive a raise of at least \$6,000.
4. ****Sustainable Funding Sources**** – These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and the Basic Allotment.
5. ****Protecting Educator Raises in Funding Allocations**** – While the expansion of the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) is not opposed, it should not come at the expense of the across-the-board raises outlined above. Additionally, the current requirement that 30% of any Basic Allotment increase be allocated toward educator pay, including paraprofessional compensation, should be raised to at least 40%.

Investing in our educators is investing in the future of Texas students. I urge the committee to take bold action to support our teachers and public schools.

K. K

Student

Austin, TX

I'm Kai! I'm four. I go to my sister's school now because I'm a big girl. I like school. Please give our teachers and schools money.

Donna Ullrich, Educator

Self

El Paso, TX

I support the HB to Bill, but they need to raise the amount significantly. I am a educator and retired in 2012. I taught for 35 years and that was my passion and my privilege. when my son was 23 years of age, he started for a company as an engineer and was making more than I was after teaching for 26 years. Please consider to raise the amount and pass HB two.

Pia Pulido

self

Dallas, TX

As a dedicated public school teacher, I am deeply concerned about HB2 and its potential impact on our schools, students, and educators. Public education is already facing significant challenges, including funding shortages, teacher retention issues, and increasing demands on educators. Legislation like HB2 could exacerbate these struggles by diverting resources from public schools. I urge you to consider the voices of educators who are on the front lines every day, working to provide quality education to all students. Please prioritize policies that strengthen, rather than undermine, our public schools.

Alice Dorsey

Self

Pearland, TX

School vouchers will rob millions from Texas schoolchildren. Let's ensure a well education future workforce. A big NO to school vouchers!!

Ellen Lemaster

Self / Special Education Paraprofessional

Montgomery, TX

Our teachers and support staff deserve a significant increase in pay. In my position as a SPED paraprofessional, I see how hard members of the staff at my school work together to help all students learn. A pay raise will help Texas retain the best educators and staff. I have worked in education for 44 years, and still feel that preparing our children for the future is the most important work that I will ever do. It has been discouraging to experience the erosion of the buying power of my paycheck the past few years. Please increase school funding so that all of us can have an increase in pay. Thank you for your help with this.

Tricia Carroll

self, educator

Dallas, TX

HB 2 for the House Public Education Committee should include:

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size allotment and Basic Allotment.

I don't oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I support raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Sabrina Ball
My family
Fort Worth, TX

The \$220 raise in the basic student allotment is disappointing. This doesn't come close to catching our great state up to the nation in student funding. Legislators keep comparing our students to those in private and charter schools but funding our kids at paltry levels. It is insulting. I was a public school kid and I am alarmed at the conditions of the school campuses and the unfunded mandates you have put in place. You expect this state to continue to be a leader, yet you don't educate our kids at excellent levels? Also, why on earth would you EVER consider giving more money to charter school facilities? Our public schools are falling apart! And they are held accountable for every penny to taxpayers thru bonds. Yet you hand over millions to private companies for brand new charter school buildings. You all should be ashamed of yourselves.

David Derry
self
Medina, TX

After having the chance to read and digest HB2 there are a few areas that I would like to specifically address in addition to those general points that I laid out below.
I applaud the efforts made in the bill to address some of the funding issues.

One specific area of concern is the increase to the basic allotment. This increase of \$220 per ADA is welcome, but hardly sufficient to address funding concerns of small rural schools. For a school the size of Medina ISD this would equate to around \$53,240 if we had 100% attendance. As you can imagine that increase when spread over a staff to address pay concerns would be minimal. Also, there are other funding areas to address such as aging technology that is required. The basic allotment needs to be increased by at least \$1,000 to account for inflation and added costs such as technology, security, and rising insurance premiums.

The increase to the small school adjustment is appreciated, however, I would argue that lumping all schools less than 1,600 in enrollment together does not adequately address small school concerns. A school in the upper end of that bracket is five times the size of a truly small school. There is another adjustment for small schools with an enrollment of less than 300, however, it is limited to schools that are the sole school in the county. This makes no sense for many rural areas and should not be a limitation since many of our rural school districts are not the only district in the county. Why should these schools be treated differently? We need common sense reform.

The other issue is with TIA being the mechanism for teacher raises. The TIA program is great if implemented by a district correctly. However, there is at least one major flaw in the program. A teacher qualifies for a designation for a period of five years. They can earn the designation each year, but that does not extend the initial five year period. This means that you can have a master teacher do great for five years and then have one year in the fifth year where they are needing to redesignate that would make them ineligible for the designation. Now, this may not seem like a big deal, but for a small school one student can be the difference in meeting those percentage growth goals. One off year should not mean that a teacher loses their designation and the funds that go along with it.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments and we appreciate the work to address school funding issues.

John Murillo
Self, Retired Texas Teacher
Boerne, TX

Please support teachers by funding their compensation and resources. Many teachers are leaving the profession due to lack of support. I have seen hundreds of students go without a teacher because no one will accept current conditions and apply. TIA and vouchers are a horrible idea that continue to do further damage to the teaching profession. Please support our children by financially supporting teachers.

cassandra posey

self

waller, TX

In favor of this bill to increase the basic allotment and increase teacher pay.

Jason Tucker

Self / Teacher

Allen, TX

I have dedicated my life to teaching for the past 29 years. Teaching was not a decision for me. As a child of two passionate educators, I clearly remember the moment I realized it was what I was meant to do.

Sadly, teaching has become increasingly difficult because of insufficient state funding. Rising health insurance costs and inflation have eroded my take-home pay for over a decade. My net pay raise this year was about \$28 per month not adjusted for inflation. I often spend \$3000 to \$5000 of my own money each year to provide learning materials for my students. I have seen my property taxes skyrocket as my district copes with inadequate state funding.

The biggest issue is the resulting increases in student-to-teacher ratios. Class sizes have risen to the point that students in some of our classrooms must climb over their desks to be seated. Larger classes mean less individual attention for students, more documentation, and more parent communication.

I never believed teaching would lead to wealth or prestige, but I once hoped to at least be respected for being an educator. Now, I just hope for some professional dignity. It is painful to “do more with less” while our state enjoys a budget surplus. It is demoralizing when public officials blame teachers for “trapping students in failing schools” when we are not given basic resources to help our students succeed.

Nearly every teacher I know is seriously considering leaving education. The overwhelming workload and emotional cost are simply too much. It is heartbreaking to see new teachers eagerly enter the profession only to say within a year, “I can’t do this anymore.”

Today’s teacher shortage is on the verge of becoming a crisis. Uncertified teachers are now hired at higher rates than certified teachers. They may know content, but they lack essential training in pedagogy and child development—knowledge critical to effective teaching. Meanwhile, experienced teachers are stretched too thin to properly mentor these new hires, compounding the problem. With fewer certified teachers, STAAR and TELPAS must often occur over multiple days. Teachers like me are pulled from our classes to administer tests instead of teaching our students.

Performance-based pay alone does not work. It is nice to reward our top teachers, but we are not in this profession to “chase a carrot.” We need substantial salary increases across the board commensurate with the value of teachers to Texas children. If we are seeking the best for our students, we need to take better care of all their teachers.

Average daily attendance as a basis for funding is unfair. Many students are absent because parents allow them to stay home.

However, our schools still must pay the bills, and teachers must work even harder to catch up students who miss school.

I oppose HB2 in its current form. We need a MUCH larger increase in the basic allotment, pay raises for all teachers, and enrollment-based funding. Thank you.

Elizabeth Wilson, FNP

Self

Abilene, TX

I support increasing student funding by the basic allotment of \$1000 minimum per student to keep up with inflation and minimum spending needs. The per student amount needs to be increased.

melissa rodriguez

self and public school students of TX

dallas, TX

Dear Rep. Bryant,

My name is Melissa Rodriguez, and I am a Texas Public School teacher in Richardson ISD. I have been teaching Pre-k for 27 years and see how important our local schools are for creating well rounded and prepared members of our community. The early intervention we provide in Pre-k is priceless for the future success of our disadvantaged students.

I've am directly aware of all the cuts that our local schools are having to make because of budget deficits. I understand via my district and ATPE that this is not being caused by our district's mismanaging of money or withholding funding for programs but instead being cause solely by the lack of state funding. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to provide for inflation, leaving school districts \$10 billion

behind this year. That means that all school districts are operating with 80% of the funding they had in 2019. I know school districts used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, last year in RISD we saw several schools close and other programs that provide supports for kids removed. Some TX schools are even losing counselors and librarians and many teachers are leaving the profession due to lack of support with student behaviors. If we had appropriate funding, then more behavior support personal could be hired. This would improve the success of all students and provide relief to teachers.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation; help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Appropriately fund our Public School!!

Sincerely,

Melissa Rodriguez

Ramiro de la Garza

self

Houston, TX

My name is Ramiro de la Garza, I am a grandparent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

MARIA DE LA GARZA

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Maria Teresa de la Garza, I am a grandparent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rachel McCleery

Self, teacher

Mansfield, TX

Please increase funding for public schools. Also, please vote against any measure that will include vouchers.

April Hilland

My Granddaughter

LEANDER, TX

Our Texan Kids Need You! - A Vote Advocating for \$1,300 per Student in Public School Funding

I understand that you are currently meeting at the capitol to discuss funding for our Texas students. My granddaughter is in the 5th grade at a local public school and I have concerns for the quality of her education if funding doesn't keep up or pass inflation and raised prices for administration of these institutions. The \$220 increase doesn't even scratch the surface to assure a quality education for our kids. Texas needs to stand up for education...our kids deserve that.

I pay taxes so that my granddaughter can have a good quality education but we rate embarassingly low in our quality of education compared to the rest of the nation. We need the funding to improve so that our kids can have the same rights and education as those in private schools. \$220 per student? No, not good enough. If this were YOUR children or grands attending, what would you want for them? Please vote with that in mind and raise the allocation of funding to reflect that golden rule, not party lines. Please raise the allocation of funding to bring us back to a respectable level of competence in education. These kids need you.

I'm speaking as a taxpayer, a voter and a concerned Mimi.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

April C. Hilland

Concerned Mimi

Fernando Morales

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Fernando Morales, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katharine Cline

self

Austin, TX

Hello, I am Katie Cline, a resident of Northwest Austin. I am against this bill because I am concerned that it does not provide adequate funding to our public schools and our educators in light of the inflation that has occurred since 2019. I believe that strong public education is essential to the development of our citizens and the continued growth of the Texas economy.

Elvia de la Garza

self

Houston, TX

My name is Elvia de la Garza, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you.

Kindal Baker

Self

Dripping Springs, TX

Having children in the both private and public schools, and contributing to public schools through tax dollars, I do not support vouchers. I do support our public schools.

The future of Texas depends on the quality of education our children receive. Defunding the public educational system will harm the future of Texas.

Again, I do NOT support Vouchers.

Ben Wilbanks

Self

El Paso, TX

The public school funding increase in HB2 is woefully insufficient for stabilizing constitutionally mandated public education in Texas. Texas public school districts are systemically underfunded which is proven by widespread budget deficits throughout Texas. If there were only one or two districts falling short that would be a different story. According to the Texas Association of School Business Officials' survey, "roughly 42 percent of responding districts ended FY 2024 in a deficit, and nearly 63 percent estimate that FY 2025 will end in a deficit. According to responses, 48 percent believe significant cuts may be in store in FY 2026."

Denise Morgan, Superintendent

Campbell Independent School District

Campbell, TX

Campbell ISD is excited to support the beginning draft for HB 2. However, we would like to see some additional expenditures to adjust for inflation. \$1340.00 for a Basic Allotment adjustment is what is needed to make us whole again. We do see some exciting additions in weighted funding but it is not enough to make up the inflation difference. Please continue to work to support public schools and fund us first.

Diana Jordan

Texas resident/Mom

Pleasanton, TX

No to HB2! Stop this scam of welfare for the wealthy. Stop starving out Texas public schools.

Maxine Higginbotham

Self

Argyle, TX

I am a voter, a parent, a taxpayer. Vouchers (whatever the name being used) are bad for students and communities! Voting to approve Vouchers is a bad idea. Public schools need to be fully funded and taxpayer money should be sent back to the districts so they can serve students.

Dennis Sepper, Dr.

self, college teacher

Dallas, TX

I think it is crucial to Texas's future to increase the support of public schools. I think the basic student allotment should be increased, and by even more than the \$1300 that is being proposed by some public school advocates. It is a scandal that the allotment has not been increased for more than half a decade and that the real-dollar support (taking account of inflation) is at 2014 levels. This increase is important not just for teachers but also for all the support staff of all kinds needed by the schools.

Kim Pernel

Self

Austin, TX

I am writing to support a larger increase (an extra \$1300 per student) in the basic student allotment. The basic allotment has not increased since 2019, despite the sharp rise in inflation and costs in recent years. I have personally benefitted from an excellent K-12 education in Texas public schools, and I want the same experience for my own children. My public school education prepared me to succeed in my chosen occupation and to give back to society, and I believe that all Texans will benefit from giving our children the resources they need to learn. Please consider using the current budget surplus to support Texas children, Texas teachers, and other school staff by increasing the basic student allotment by \$1300, not the \$220 proposed in the current bill.

David Edgar
Deer Park Independent School Dist
Deer Park, TX

Hello,

My name is David Edgar, and I am the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services at Deer Park ISD. I am submitting written testimony in favor of House Bill 2, as introduced by the Texas House. I want to thank Chairman Buckley and the members of the House Committee on Public Education for their work on this important piece of legislation. Without it, much needed state dollars will remain unallocated for K12 public education.

DPISD is supportive of the bill's proposed increases to the basic allotment, as well as the special education and compensatory education allotments, to name a few. While we are thankful for these additional funds, much more must be done. DPISD has lost formula transition grant (FTG) funding. This allotment was the equivalent to an average (2019/20 to 2023/24) of \$1,091 per ADA over the 5-year duration of FTG. The average dollar amount is over \$11.4 million per year.

HB 2, as filed, with an estimated additional \$300 per student gain, only restores a small portion of the revenue that was lost due to the expiration of FTG. You have my support as you navigate the challenging process of doing right by all the different types of school districts in the state, and I hope that the final version of HB 2 strikes a fair balance in terms of the additional funds allocated to districts of all enrollment sizes and student demographics.

We ask that the restoration of FTG be considered in a committee substitute, even if only as a reduction in recapture as opposed to a hold harmless state aid allotment. However, if the FTG allotment cannot be restored as part of this process, I implore you to make the necessary changes to the bill to drive as much new money into the basic allotment as possible. It amounts to millions of dollars of annual funding for the Deer Park ISD.

Regards,

David Edgar

Tim Lance
self - retired educator
Austin, TX

Billions in surplus. Thousands per kid behind in funding. I am embarrassed by the funding this state provides. And don't even get me started about vouchers/so-called savings accounts.

Meghan Zigmond
self
Port Aransas, TX

My name is Meghan Zigmond, I live in Aransas Pass, and I am a taxpayer, property owner, parent of two children, and Port Aransas ISD employee). I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Kristin Warren

Self

Keller, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kristin Warren and I am a parent/community member in Keller ISD. A lifelong Republican voter, I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from the state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, fine arts programs, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with extremely limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
- 2 Fully funding special education services and fine arts to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
- 3 Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
- 4 Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
- 5 Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs.

When did public education become disposable? It certainly is a necessity for my children and our community. Public education is the most important investment we can make in the future and I urge you to do right by your constituents, many of whom voted for you and trust you to act in the best interest of our children.

Rebecca Holmes

Self / Texas Dyslexia Coalition

Dallas, TX

I have a child who came through our Texas system during the years of the illegal 8.5% cap on special education enrollment and the years of denial of access for students with dyslexia in particular. If you wonder why special education enrollment has increased so dramatically in recent years, it is because students in the past like my child were illegally blocked from accessing special education services now have access to those services.

I'm thankful there are efforts underway via HB 2 to revamp our 40 year old special education funding formula. It is a relic based on an outdated picture of special education...and is ineffective at matching state funding to the expenses schools incur. However, the ultimate impact efforts to improve special education will hinge on the critical funding decisions made to end the special education funding gap

The best funding formula in the world will be inadequate without an increase the special education allotment to address the current gap of at least \$1.7 billion each year between state funding and district expenses. Please increase the special education allotment to support students with disabilities.

Please also end the disability penalty that denies schools basic allotment funds for students served in a special education setting. General school expenses like maintenance, insurance, food service, counselors, nurses, etc do not decrease just because a student may receive some services in a special education setting.

Sarah Cox
self
Austin, TX

I urge you to fully fund Texas public schools.

Folks claim that we live in a meritocracy and think that means talent and effort alone, but there are additional components to what we think of as merit. They are: investment and opportunity.

We undermine our state's future when we underfund our public schools. We must deeply invest in all of our students, our public schools, and our teachers. We need to raise the amount of money per student that our public schools get to the amount that the state is proposing to give to private and homeschooled children through the voucher scam. If we did so, our public schools could surpass even the best private schools in performance.

We must increase state funding dramatically to provide more opportunities in our public schools. We can give our children, our state's future, the life experiences and connections that make up the fourth leg of merit. They can meet and connect with more leaders, they can explore more career opportunities. They can be challenged with more interesting projects, field trips, and classroom resources. What starts in Texas could change the world, but only if we give all of our students those opportunities, if we find the diamonds in the rough and invest in them and give them opportunities.

This state used to raise presidents. Now, we're in a race to the bottom of national achievement due to cuts in public school funding. This must change and the only way to do it is through making a large enough investment in all of our state's children to fully fund their schools and pay their teachers well. Our children can be the future of this state, the nation, and the world, but only if we believe in them enough to invest in them.

Strong public schools help create strong communities. When schools suffer, property values decline, businesses struggle, and workforce development weakens. Texans want our public schools to have the funds they need, we want our children to be seen as the investment in the future we know they are, and we want our teachers to be paid like the certified professionals they are. Public school funding and teacher compensation needs to keep up with inflation and should never be held hostage to get other legislation passed.

I appreciate your time and efforts towards fully funding Texas public education.

Lauren Logan
Self
Austin, TX

Please do support school choice or school vouchers. This would only remove funds and strain funding for public education even more. Our public schools are already extremely underfunded and this would hurt the most at risk children in our communities.

I believe in public education. I am a product of public education. I am a born Texas, a mother of 2 and a small business owner. Thanks to public education I have been able to achieve my goals and success. Public education is what will unite our community in such divisive times.

I have a child with a 504 that has helped my son in a public school situation completely and totally flourish where that was not the case in a private institution. Investing in our public school education to provide more support for students and teachers is the best use of money for the children of our community.

Chris Ogle

Self. I'm an attorney .

HOUSTON, TX

My name is Chris Ogle. I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. I have two kids in SBISD schools. I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jaime Coffey

self

Houston, TX

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rachael Vorberg Rugh

Self

Fort Worth, TX

The \$200 increase to the student allotment for public schools is far too low; research suggests that an increase of \$1300 per pupil is needed to get per pupil spending back to 2019 levels, adjusting for inflation.

I do not support giving charter schools equivalent funding to public schools, as they are not required to provide necessary programs for disabled and special needs students. I agree with additional funds for public school teacher salaries and for improving special needs funding.

I am not a parent, but I know that quality public schools are to my benefit: these young people need the best education possible for the ongoing economic and social well-being of this state. Increased funding for public schools is an investment in our future that we badly need. Public funding should go to public schools, not charters or private schools.

Lisa Exum

self

Plano, TX

This bill appears to place charter schools on par with designated school districts. Charter schools are, at best, a stop gap measure to be used while researching and addressing any failures with the general public school districts. If public school systems are failing their students, it is absurdly illogical to remove funding from the schools.

"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments....We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal....Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment." This quote is taken directly from Chief Justice Warren's opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (USSC+). Charter schools are not available to all students. The use of charter schools and the continued funding of public schools is a modern version of separate but equal which was found unconstitutional. Therefore, this bill is unconstitutional on its face and must not pass.

Due to the inherently unconstitutional nature of this bill, it will be held to severe scrutiny by the judicial system if it is passed. The litigation which will most certainly commence upon passage of this bill will be exorbitantly expensive.

I am a longtime resident of Texas whose daughter attended public school. I implore you to vote against this bill.

Heather Morse
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heather Morse, I am a parent and former employee in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlights a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

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Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tony Raymond
Sabine ISD
Gladewater, TX

Only to keep up with inflation the daily allotment would need to be increasing substantially more than only \$220. We've experienced 20%-50% inflation in various categories since 2019. We are a small school in rural East Texas. Our ADA has increased every year including during Covid. But our budget only increased a little. We have an enrollment of 1563 and nearly 100% attendance, but our budget is right at \$15,000,000. Through federal, state, & local taxes we are averaging \$10k a student. An increase of \$220 is only 3.5% of the current DA. If you use the numbers being touted by Abbott & others around \$15k it's only a 1.5% increase. With the state having an surplus, why are expected to do more with less. Even at an increase of \$1500 in the DA, that's only enough to give us the same spending power we had 5-6 years ago. It's not even an increase. You were a board member. You know how this works.

Hollyann Wood

self, parent, student, artist

AUSTIN, TX

I urge you to fully fund Texas public schools.

Folks claim that we live in a meritocracy and think that means talent and effort alone, but there are additional components to what we think of as merit. They are: investment and opportunity.

We undermine our state's future when we underfund our public schools. We must deeply invest in all of our students, our public schools, and our teachers. We need to raise the amount of money per student that our public schools get to the amount that the state is proposing to give to private and homeschooled children through the voucher scam. If we did so, our public schools could surpass even the best private schools in performance.

We must increase state funding dramatically to provide more opportunities in our public schools. We can give our children, our state's future, the life experiences and connections that make up the fourth leg of merit. They can meet and connect with more leaders, they can explore more career opportunities. They can be challenged with more interesting projects, field trips, and classroom resources. What starts in Texas could change the world, but only if we give all of our students those opportunities, if we find the diamonds in the rough and invest in them and give them opportunities.

This state used to raise presidents. Now, we're in a race to the bottom of national achievement due to cuts in public school funding. This must change and the only way to do it is through making a large enough investment in all of our state's children to fully fund their schools and pay their teachers well. Our children can be the future of this state, the nation, and the world, but only if we believe in them enough to invest in them.

Strong public schools help create strong communities. When schools suffer, property values decline, businesses struggle, and workforce development weakens. Texans want our public schools to have the funds they need, we want our children to be seen as the investment in the future we know they are, and we want our teachers to be paid like the certified professionals they are. Public school funding and teacher compensation needs to keep up with inflation and should never be held hostage to get other legislation passed.

I appreciate your time and efforts towards fully funding Texas public education.

Angelica Morin

self

Austin, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Angelica Morin, I am a community member in Austin ISD in Austin and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from public school state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Natalia Bernal

Self

Manafield, TX

Lawmakers, please consider increasing funding to our schools, not decreasing it. I am a product of public schools and currently have one kindergartener and a 4 year old. Their education and the success of our state lies in your decisions. Even if you don't have children or ever did have children in public schools, know that society as a whole benefits from a good public education. Please consider increasing funding by \$1300/child so our state can be better and do better. Thank you. -a very concerned Texas mom

Christen George-McFerrin

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Joshua Feinstein

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Joshua Feinstein. I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Alexis Hare

Self

Austin, TX

I'm writing as a concerned parent of a public school student in Texas. Our schools are facing significant challenges, and increased funding is urgently needed. A minimum of \$1,340 per student is necessary to restore funding to 2019 levels. I ask that you advocate strongly for this increase to support the educational needs of all Texas children.

Minou Feinstein

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Minou Feinstein. I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

EM Branagh

self/retired

Austin, TX

By all measures, it would require \$24B to get schools to their 2019 spending levels. So while the state touts an increase in the amount it has spent on public schools, this has only been to fulfill their obligation to hold the absolute \$s spent on education whole i.e. to back fill cuts caused by the state's cut of property taxes. If as they claim, Republicans are interested in improving education in Texas, redirect this wasteful spending on vouchers to our public schools. Make TX public schools the envy of the US - move us from 29th in the US to #1.

On a personal note, I am not interested in funding by neighbor's decision to send their child to a private school. The state does not give me \$ to hire my own police force because I don't like the Texas State Police Force i.e. we don't pick and choose what we will and won't pay for and get a rebate on our taxes for those choices. I strongly urge you to vote against this bill and instead I would like to see these things:

the Basic allotment tied to inflation indexes to Gov Abbott cannot hold it hostage anymore

The basic allotment become enrollment-based vs. attendance based

Full funding to make up for 6 years of missing funding

Again, Vote NO on the Voucher Scam.

Thank you.

Kim Walker
None
Mesquite, TX
Give \$1300

Melissa Bowers
Self and my children Teacher
Cleburne, TX

My name is Melissa Bowers and I have children and am a teacher in Texas Public Schools.

I have been teaching for 13 years and see how important our local schools are for the well-being of my community.

I've witnessed the budget cuts that are happening at my school district because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians. I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs. I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

School vouchers in Texas present serious concerns about accountability, access, and effectiveness in serving students, particularly in rural areas where public schools are already scarce. The reality is that most Texas counties do not have private schools, meaning vouchers would do little to improve educational options for rural families while diverting funds from public education.

Texas has 254 counties, and a significant number of them do not have a single private school. According to data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the vast majority of Texas students—nearly 5.4 million—attend public schools, while only around 300,000 attend private schools. In many rural counties, public schools are the only educational institutions available. Offering school vouchers in these areas would be meaningless for families who have no private school options, while simultaneously taking funding away from the only educational resource that exists: the public school system.

Sincerely,
Melissa Bowers

Mindy Weber

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Hello. Thank you for your attention to the State of our Schools. I am the mother of three school age children as well as a public school teacher and I am deeply concerned that Texas school funding has not kept pace with inflation.

My fellow teachers and I are working hard and my district is financially responsible. I also know we have not seen a significant increase in student funding since 2019 and are still in 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite additional expensive mandates and double digit inflation. We have a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

I understand there are House and Senate bills that propose directly supporting teachers but I ask you to raise the basic allotment by \$1300, instead. This would give a much-needed and long-delayed \$10 billion investment in our children and their futures. We have the money. And if we don't, we need to understand why.

Raising the basic allotment gives our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve AND it gives districts the opportunity to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage amid funding that hasn't kept up with 2014 dollars. Our teachers and students deserve additional support.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I will be paying attention relentlessly through this legislative session to ensure our schools get the funds they need to meet the needs of our children and all the people who support them before sine die on June 2, 2025.

Sincerely,
Mindy Weber

Bridget Williams
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Please increase the basic allotment to \$10,000/student, as that is the amount for the voucher program. Please include an automatic adjustment for inflation. Glad to see there are financial and performance indicators for schools that receive vouchers! Make this fair and equitable!

Leanna O'Brien
Self
Coppell, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual SpEd spending gap. Adopt better distribution methods for SpEd funds and end!! the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half their Basic Allotment GenEd funds for most students served by SpEd. In Coppell ISD, insufficient funds and staff contributed to the delay in testing my son for dyslexia and other learning difficulties. Only after submitting outside testing eligibility was I really listened to. And as soon as his required dyslexia course was completed, the school pushed hard to remove SpEd assistance as if he were cured of dyslexia. Please don't hold our districts hostage by withholding our OWN funds!

Alicia Smith
Self
Fairfield, TX

Dear House Public Education Committee ,

My name is Alicia Smith and I have two children that received a great education in public schools as well as two grandchildren in Texas Public Schools at this time. I have been volunteering for years and see how important our local schools are for the well-being of my community.

I've been researching in newspapers and talking with teachers and local superintendents about all of the cuts that school districts are having to make because of budget deficits due to inflation and underfunding. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, and school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars.

Here's my recommendation:

Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would all have enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

I also believe all educational staff needs a substantial raise. TIAs are capped so that few are able to receive the money even if they qualify. Your qualifications leave out great teachers in all the other positions that do not teach the federal mandated test. It takes all of a school's staff to nurture our students day in and day out that makes the difference. Don't pit teacher against teacher because of the subject or grade level they teach.

Sincerely,

Alicia Smith
A taxpayer, grand parent, and public school supporter

Sara Donovan

Self, Attorney

Austin, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sara Donovan, I am a parent/community member in Austin/Austin ISD and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from public school state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Anthony McSpadden

myself as a citizen of Texas and a parent

Cedar Park, TX

I am a parent of two who both went to public schools, and myself graduated from public school. The thought of vouchers for private schools does not resonate with me. We already have school choice in Texas; if you live here, you are granted free access to quality public education. If you choose to send your child to private school, that's your choice. Taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing costs for wealthier families. Additionally, Texas has a large rural population, and private schools are largely non-existent in those areas. A voucher program would siphon money away from public schools, and in rural areas, this could be even more devastating than it would be in urban areas. I'm a "no" vote where vouchers are concerned.

Kate Low

Port Aransas Independent School District

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Kate Low, I live in Port Aransas. I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner, small business owner, and PAISD employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year. Being that our district is already robin-hooded about 80% of our funds, it drastically affects our district paying more than most schools for this insurance.

Jeannine Lee

Mothers for Democracy

Garland, TX

This Bill is NOT in the best interests of our schools, teachers or children. I'm asking the committee to vote NO on HB2.

Emily Lorenz, Mrs.

Calallen ISD

Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Emily Lorenz, and I serve as the superintendent of Calallen ISD. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2 (HB2) and its critical funding provisions for Texas public schools.

Every day, I see the impact of school funding decisions on students, teachers, and communities. Rising costs, outdated funding formulas, and financial pressures make it harder to sustain the resources our students deserve. HB2 takes important steps to address these challenges, and I urge the Legislature to ensure these key provisions remain in the final bill:

- Small & Mid-Size Allotments
 - o Help districts provide instructional support, academic programs, and competitive salaries
 - o Schools like Calallen ISD depend on these funds to maintain equity
- Basic Allotment & Inflation Adjustment
 - o The Basic Allotment increase is needed but still falls short
 - o To recruit and retain teachers and staff, we must invest more in salaries and stability
 - o Future funding should include an inflation index to ensure schools don't fall behind as costs rise
- Rising Property Casualty Insurance Costs
 - o As property values rise, so do insurance premiums, straining district budgets
 - o Calallen ISD has seen insurance costs rise significantly, forcing cuts to programs, lessened coverage, and higher deductibles
 - o This issue is worse in coastal and disaster-prone areas like ours, where coverage is harder to maintain
 - o Rising state property valuations further drive up costs, adding to financial strain
- Special Education Funding Adjustments
 - o HB2 improves special education funding by shifting to a needs-based model
 - o Provides funding for initial evaluations, freeing up resources for direct student services
 - o Ensures schools can support students with therapies, interventions, and accommodations
- HB2 is a step in the right direction, but these provisions must remain
 - o Schools cannot afford to fall behind—funding must be fair and predictable

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Texas public schools.

Catherine Casey

Self

Georgetown, TX

HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment that is far less than is needed to recover for the impact of inflation over the last 5 years. Adequate funding would be a \$1500 increase in the allotment.

Special education mandates MUST be fully funded. Current special education expenses across Texas are far beyond the funding level.

Safety mandates must be fully funded. If they are warranted, then the state should fully fund them.

Free full-day Pre-K is a necessity for all low-income children, as well as for the young children of district staff. In order to recruit highly trained teachers, this benefit is necessary to be competitive.

In addition to annual performance-based bonuses, starting salaries must be increased if we are going to attract college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.

There should be NO hiring of uncertified teachers. This will only happen if the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Heidi Shellhorn

self, teacher

Austin, TX

My name is Heidi Shellhorn, and I have had the honor of being a teacher for the past 22 years, 15 of those years in Austin, and one year in Alaska, and 6 years in Houston. I've taught everything from kindergarten to 8th grade, and I am currently a special education and English Language Arts teacher at the middle school level. I am also the parent of a 6th grader who attends Kealing Middle School, and a 4th grader who attends Russell Lee Elementary. I am beyond grateful for the amazing work these schools do for my children, and ALL children. I am writing to ask that you reject this bill and that our wonderful public schools be fully funded at levels worthy of our state and its populace. Texas could be a leader in education if only our leaders would fully fund our schools. Please reject the privatization of our schools via vouchers, and instead update the funding of our schools to complete with other states and countries. I thank you for your consideration.

Courtney Bechtol

Self

Rockport, TX

My name is Courtney Bechtol. I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a taxpayer, voter, and property owner. I also have 3 children who will all attend RFISD. One of which is currently enrolled in 1st grade. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Gloria Mann

Self

Austin, TX

I am asking for you to reject any school vouchers. Instead, use that money to fund public school teachers and equipment for students to use within the public school.

Margaret McKinney
Self/teacher in Frisco ISD
The Colony, TX

As a 25 year veteran teacher, product of public schools, and a parent of children who attended public school- I am against vouchers; however, I am also concerned that the proposed increases is deficient and will not provide the the amount necessary to adequately fund our Texas public school system. I am asking you to say no to this bill. As a public educator, I have the ability to change lives every day. I currently teach 6th, 7th and 8th grade in Frisco- which is a very nice school district. We have excellent numbers, and we have supportive families. My 6th grade GT ILA classroom has 32 students in it this year, and it is difficult for us to do the same things in my class that we have been able to do in the past because it is very tight in here when all the students are present. Additionally, because they combined my class due to funding, I am also responsible for our school's reading intervention classes. Each day I spend with the brightest of the bright and the strugglingest of the struggling. 4 teacher preparations each and every day. The amount of time and energy I am putting into teaching this year has truly impact my work life balance, and I am not able to be the greatest ANYTHING. If I give 100 percent to my students, I fail my children. If I put 100 percent into my children, I fail my students. It is a lot of stress on me. Prior to Frisco ISD, I spent 20 years in Dallas and Garland ISD's teaching at Title 1 schools. If you truly care about public education and the families of our state, then you will vote no to a program that will not benefit anyone who actually needs it. The rich children do not need you. The poor students do. The way to help your at risk, impoverished future Congressmen is fully fund public education in our state. The HB2 does NOT do it. Please vote no.

Johanna Chu
Self
Austin, TX

For HB2, asking for the basic allotment to be increased by at least \$1340 (to get us back to 2019 levels) and for more funding for bilingual programs. HB3 oppose

Megan Simoneau
Vista Ridge High School
Leander, TX

I believe I was always meant to be a teacher. I excel in my work environment and have been recognized for the work I do with and for my students. I recently achieved National Board Certification through an immense amount of hard work. The process is extremely rigorous and intentional in assessing the ability of the teacher to meet the needs of all students through instruction, evaluation, differentiation, and content knowledge. Because my district has not yet developed a local designation system, the elimination of National Board Certification is financially detrimental to exceptional teachers in my district, like myself. I ask that you keep National Board Certification as a pathway to TIA at the recognized level. Anyone that can achieve National Board Certification has proven themselves as a master teacher with expertise to help support all students in their classroom. They deserve to be recognized as a master of their craft and receive financial incentives through TIA.

Megan Simoneau
Leander ISD
Leander, TX

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Rachel Almond, Dr.
Self. Pharmacist and mother
Rockport, TX

My name is Rachel Almond, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and have children in public school. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year. This is something so crucial for communities like mine.

Robert Rutishauser
Self
Austin, TX

Public schools are essential to the proper functioning of Austin's economy. The current underfunding of public schools will be a disaster for our economy in the years ahead. If we want to reduce the costs of homelessness, unskilled workers, and crime then we must increase funding by at least \$1,000 per student. I have studied the cost of poor education and found that about 80% of the inmates in Texas prisons are high school dropouts. This is the cost of not funding schools.

Tracy Fisher
Self
COPPELL, TX

Subject: Fully Fund Texas Public Schools – \$220 Is Not Enough!

Dear Public Education Committee Members,

As a committed Republican and engaged member of our Texas community, I urge you to fully fund our Texas public schools in HB2. Strong, well-funded public schools are a cornerstone of our state's prosperity, ensuring that every child—regardless of zip code—receives a high-quality education that prepares them for the future.

A \$220 increase to the basic allotment is NOT ENOUGH to restore our schools to pre-pandemic funding levels. Inflation and rising costs have left our schools struggling, and as a result, schools are closing, teachers are leaving, and student-enriching programs are being cut. This is unacceptable.

Texans expect you to prioritize responsible funding for our neighborhood schools, not let them wither due to inaction. Do your job. Fully fund our public schools so they can retain quality teachers, provide essential resources, and keep our children in safe, thriving learning environments.

Investing in public education is a fiscally responsible and conservative approach to keeping Texas strong. A well-educated workforce strengthens our economy, reduces dependency on government programs, and keeps Texas competitive. Our public schools need your leadership—now more than ever.

I urge you to take decisive action. Fully fund HB2 at a level that meets the needs of Texas students, families, and communities.

Thank you for your service to Texas, and I look forward to your support.

Sincerely,
Tracy Fisher
Grandparent
Voter

Ryan Britt
Self - Video Producer
Dallas, TX

I do not have kids but having worked directly with Dallas ISD and many organizations dedicated to improving outcomes for North Texas children, I have seen firsthand how providing adequate resources to teachers and schools directly impacts student achievement. It's not only the right thing to do in terms of providing equity of opportunity but, without a workforce built on strong educational foundations, how can we expect our state to remain competitive? From a social perspective, the choice is fund schools now or pay exponentially more later to deal with the consequences of an underfunded public education system. I would encourage lawmakers to look at the copious data related to outcomes for students who are not reading on grade-level by third grade to fully understand the critical role teaching and public education has in maintaining a healthy, happy society for all of us to enjoy.

Demi Cradit
Self, nurse practitioner
Conroe, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Demi Cradit, I am a parent/community member in Conroe ISD in Conroe and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from CISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
- **Transportation:** The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
 - 2 Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
 - 3 Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
 - 4 Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
 - 5 Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation
- Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

In light of private school vouchers, a logical next step is ensuring public schools are equally and equitably provided for.

Thanks you!

Stephanie Peco

Self, Retired

Austin, TX

HB2 is undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Article 7, Section 1 of the Texas Constitution, says “The general diffusion of knowledge, being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.”

Lauren Young

Self- mom of 3 public school children

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren Young, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs.

These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Young

Mat Hency

Self

Dallas, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mat Hency, I am a parent/community member in Dallas ISD and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Sarah Page
Self, Household CEO
Keller, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Page and I am a parent/community member in Keller ISD. As a lifelong Republican voter, I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from the state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, fine arts programs, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with extremely limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
- 2 Fully funding special education services and fine arts to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
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- 4 Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
- 5 Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs.

When did public education become disposable? It certainly is a necessity for my children and our community. Public education is the most important investment we can make in the future and I urge you to do right by your constituents, many of whom voted for you and trust you to act in the best interest of our children.

Rachel Owens

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Owens, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Christy Ilfrey

Self, NativeDave Coastal Growers

Aransas Pass, TX

My name is Christy Ilfrey, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and small business owner. I also am part of Rockport-Fulton Education Foundation. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Adrienne Goldsberry

myself. University instructor.

AUSTIN, TX

I am advocating for more support for public education. Our state is in the fortunate position of having funds to spend - let's spend at least some of them on our children! I support raising the basic allotment for students to \$1340. Thank you for your consideration.

Gabriela Polit

self

Austin, TX

- public school advocates ask that the basic student allotment be raised by \$1300 (current bill is only \$220).
- the basic allotment has not been increased since 2019 and is still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite expensive additional mandates imposed by the government on schools and double-digit inflation.
- Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.
- Raising the basic allotment gives our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve AND it gives districts the opportunity to money to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage

Kelsey Hency

Self

Dallas, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelsey Hency, I am a parent/community member in Dallas ISD and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Adam Stiles

Self/National Accts Svc Coordinator

Austin, TX

I am writing to advocate for funding for \$1300 per student for public education in Texas. I am a native/multi-generational Texan, and I VOTE. I am also the PROUD recipient of a Texas public education. My grandmother (Florence Stiles) was a public educator for over 20 years and a volunteer in her community well beyond that. They named a public school after her (Stiles Middle School) in Leander. I am also married to a nationally board certified educator (Dana Stiles) who is in her 20th year as a mathematics educator at the high school level. She has been awarded teacher of the year at Bowie HS in Austin and holds a master's degree in mathematics. My point in saying this is that they imbued in me the importance of public education for all, not just the few. Our diversity is our strength, and proposed vouchers/refusal to use our 'rainy day' fund in support of public schools is contributing to the demise of an institution that is GUARANTEED in our original charter and Constitution. Please do what is right. Give us the necessary support to be a shining example in the US, not a state in decline that only caters to the education of a select dynamic of student. Together we succeed, divided we most assuredly fall. Thank you for your time.

Staci Weaver, Superintendent

Legacy Preparatory Charter

Plano, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 2 and to emphasize the critical importance of equitable facility funding for charter schools. Charter schools play a vital role in expanding educational opportunities and meeting the diverse needs of students across our state. However, the lack of dedicated facility funding creates significant challenges in providing students with safe, modern, and innovative learning environments.

As we work to ensure every student has access to a high-quality education, it's essential that all public schools—both traditional and charter receive the resources needed to maintain and improve their facilities. Investing in facility funding for charter schools will not only support student achievement but also strengthen educational outcomes across our communities.

I urge you to support and prioritize equitable funding that empowers all public schools to provide the best possible learning environments for our students.

To date I can document over a million dollars that went to facilities and not curriculum and instruction.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to education.

Sincerely,

Staci Weaver

Superintendent

Legacy Preparatory Charter

Cody Knott, Dr.

Self

Eastland, TX

To Whom It May Concern,

As a committed educator in Texas, I respectfully urge you to carefully consider the impact of passing a voucher bill in our state. For too long, teachers have been affected by political agendas. Much like police officers, firefighters, and EMTs, we are public servants who dedicate ourselves to the well-being and success of our students. Public schools must be preserved because they serve all students, unlike private and charter schools, which often have selective admissions processes.

It is crucial that we ensure public funds stay within public schools and dispel the notion that parents are not involved in their children's education. While many parents are actively engaged, others are not. However, it is important to remember that parents are the primary influence on their children's education. Despite teachers' best efforts to connect through calls, emails, and letters, some parents remain disengaged. Data from parent-teacher conferences across the state shows a wide range of participation. Teachers should not be used as political pawns, and the term "school choice" should not be reduced to a political slogan. Parents are always encouraged to work with teachers to support their child's learning.

We are left wondering why there is a teacher shortage, especially when educators are so often criticized by those in Austin. If real change is to occur, it is essential that teachers are consulted and included in these discussions. Change can only happen when we come together with a shared vision. Our common goal should always be prioritizing students and ensuring their success.

Please take into account the perspectives of teachers, who advocate for the best interests of students. Collaboration between parents and educators is key to supporting every child's well-being. Political slogans and baseless criticism hinder productive dialogue. Scheduling more meetings with both parents and teachers at public schools will allow us to create meaningful change. As educators committed to our communities, we must have a voice in shaping the future of education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cody Knott

Teacher, Eastland, TX

Taylor Tidmore, Dr.

Self - Physician

Abilene, TX

I just recently joined the Abilene ISD school board in June of 2024. I am still learning a lot, but I have really enjoyed the job so far. I have had children in AISD for 15 years and it was my deep love for the district that motivated me to run for school board last year. While I have always been very appreciative of the district, being on the board and getting an insider's look has made my love and appreciation of our district, our administrators, and our teachers grow exponentially. I get to witness on a regular basis a group of people giving their heart and soul to better the lives of the children of our community.

While the work they do is so impressive, it often seems they are fighting an uphill battle. It often feels like they are not getting the support and appreciation they need and deserve from the state level. While money cannot solve every problem, it sure would make their jobs easier and their chances of success seem much more in reach.

In August the AISD school board, like 50-60% of the districts in our state, adopted a deficit budget (\$14 million in our case). We did not adopt a deficit budget because we are not being good stewards of our money or because we are being wasteful. It is because our public schools are not being funded at a level that has kept up with inflation and allows us to do the job of educating kids at the highest level. In the last six months we have made major changes to help us move towards a balanced budget—implemented a hiring freeze, enforced a strict staffing matrix, voted to close two elementary schools (one of which my kids attended for 14 years), and asked principals to begin cutting expenses by 5-10%, just to name a few examples.

I am asking you to fight for an increase in the basic allotment. While special moneys for safety, implementing new curriculum, and teacher raises is great there is no guarantee the money will be given in the next legislative session. The basic allotment is the money schools can count on to be there consistently and that they can base a balanced budget on. A \$500-\$1000 increase in the basic allotment would go a long way towards allowing districts like ours and others across the state to do the job they are asked to do.

I would also ask that you vote against Governor Abbott's Education Freedom Plan / ESA / vouchers. Using state funds for private school education is unacceptable in my opinion. We have a lot of low-income families in our district. Even if you give them \$10,000 they still cannot afford one of the few private schools in our city. And even if they can come up with the funds there is no guarantee the private school will accept them. Not to mention all the rural communities in our area have no private school options to even consider. Taking money from struggling and hurting schools and giving it to private schools is not the solution.

I think you are aware that the large majority of the Texas public is against vouchers. Please listen to them!

Cindy Skinner

Self

Lago Vista, TX

I want you to know that this Voucher Scam represents a fight between a bi-partisan, pro public education coalition vs. billionaire mega-donors who control Greg Abbott and Dan Patrick. Your constituents love their kids, believe in public school teachers, support our neighborhood schools and want them fully funded. We don't want a Voucher Scam that will eventually defund our local schools.

I would like to see these things:

- * the Basic allotment tied to inflation indexes so Gov Abbott cannot hold it hostage anymore
- * The basic allotment become enrollment-based vs. attendance based
- * Full funding to make up for 6 years of missing funding
- * Vote NO on the Voucher Scam.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Wilson
Texas Dyslexia Coalition
Dallas, TX

My name is Elizabeth Wilson, and I want to begin by thanking you for the passage of HB 3928 last session. The Beckley Wilson Act was a transformative piece of legislation that ended the long-standing practice in Texas of severely restricting special education enrollment, particularly for students with dyslexia. I cannot express enough how grateful we are for your support in passing this crucial bill.

HB 3928 was not just about dyslexia—it was about inclusion. The rising special education enrollment rates in Texas are a reflection of the rightful and long-overdue inclusion of students with dyslexia, as well as others, under the umbrella of IDEA—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Thanks to your work, children with dyslexia should now have access to the resources, support, and services they need to succeed in school.

However, while the passage of HB 3928 is a monumental step forward, there is still work to be done to ensure that all students with special education needs are truly supported in our classrooms. The significance of HB 3928 goes beyond just providing access; it highlights the broader promise of IDEA—that every child, regardless of their disability, has the right to receive the education and services they need to thrive.

As we look toward the future, we cannot ignore the gaps that still exist in our special education system. Our state's 40-year-old funding formula for distributing special education funds is outdated and ineffective. It does a poor job of matching state funds with district expenses, leaving schools struggling to meet the needs of their students. This funding gap—now at an alarming \$1.7 billion per year—must be closed if we are to fulfill the promises made to students with disabilities. Simply put: more money and a better system to distribute it.

Finally, the state must address the "disability penalty" that causes schools to lose half of their basic allotment for general education students served by special education. This penalty is especially damaging for schools that provide short-term services, like the 45 minutes of dyslexia intervention. It creates an inequitable financial burden that undermines the ability of schools to fully support all students.

The stories of successful individuals with disabilities—from Stephen Hawking to Steve Jobs—serve as powerful reminders of what's possible when we provide the right support and resources. It's time that we make sure every child in Texas has the same opportunity to reach their full potential.

So, I am asking for your continued investment in our students with special education needs. By closing the funding gap and eliminating the disability penalty, you can ensure that every child in Texas receives the education they deserve.

Thank you for your time and for your ongoing commitment to supporting Texas students.

Beckley Wilson

Self

Dallas, TX

Hi, my name is Beckley Wilson. I began advocating for children with dyslexia at the Texas Capitol when I was 12 years old, and today, I'm starting to look at colleges, but I am still deeply committed to this cause.

Along with thousands of other Texas students, I was directly affected by the 8.5% special education funding cap. As a result, I was denied the services I needed under IDEA, which severely impacted my ability to succeed academically.

It took two legislative sessions to pass House Bill 3928, but now, thanks to its passage, students like me have access to critical services through special education. This law ensures important protections under IDEA, such as IEPs, accommodations, and legal guarantees that enable us to succeed in the classroom. I am grateful for the efforts that went into passing this bill, and I appreciate the ongoing commitment of policymakers to advocate for students like me.

However, while the passage of this law was a significant step forward, it is not enough without the necessary funding to implement it effectively.

The state's special education funding formula, which has remained largely unchanged for over 40 years, is outdated and fails to address the actual needs of Texas school districts adequately. The current system does not align with the rising costs of special education services, leaving districts to stretch already limited resources. In fact, Texas schools are facing a \$1.7 billion per year funding gap for special education services, and this deficit must be closed if we are to meet the needs of our students.

Additionally, the state's funding formula contains a critical flaw: the "disability penalty," which forces schools to lose half of their basic allotment for general education students served by special education. This penalty applies not only to students with more severe disabilities but also to those who may only receive short-term services, such as a 45-minute dyslexia intervention session. This penalty creates a severe financial burden on schools, limiting their ability to fully support the students who need help the most.

Without an increase in funding and a reformed system for distributing those funds, the promises of laws like HB 3928 will remain just that—promises. Schools must have the resources they need to fulfill the commitments made in IEPs and provide the support students require to succeed.

I respectfully ask that you not only increase funding for special education but also work toward reforming the funding structure to ensure it more accurately reflects the needs of students across the state. Every student deserves the opportunity to succeed, and we must ensure they have the resources and support they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving Texas students' future.

Jaclyn Lappin
Self, Homemaker
Houston, TX

My name is Jaclyn Lappin. I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation.

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow. Please invest in our future

Jennifer Kost, Mrs.

Self

Austin, TX

Good afternoon , I'm a proud parent of a high school senior who will be attending St. Edward's University in the fall. Like my husband and I, our daughter is a product of K-12 public schools. We believe that a strong education is key to career and financial success, and to upward mobility. Access to free public education is a birthright of all Texans and of all American. It is in the interest of the state to provide an excellent education to all children and youth, both as a moral imperative for their individual benefit, and as a practical strategy for the benefit of the state as a whole. A knowledgeable, thoughtful, hardworking, and skilled citizenry drives the economic engine of our state directly through innovation, creation, and production, and indirectly by attracting businesses to a skilled workforce, individuals' hope for their own future fueling well-being and productivity, and economic prosperity driving consumption and investment.

The key to all this success, is a robust PreK-12 education. Therefore, funding public education must be a priority for our state.

I'm asking you to take three steps today:

1. Raise the basic allotment by \$4,400, to \$10,560.
2. Index the basic allotment to inflation.
3. Pay districts based on enrollment, instead of attendance.

The basic allotment would have to be raised by over \$1,000 just to account for inflation since 2019. That is not enough. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states in the US for per-student funding, \$4,400 per student below the national average.

Funding public education should not be a partisan issue and it should not need to take up so much of your time and energy every session. Indexing the basic allotment to inflation would ensure our schools continue to receive the resources to educate our students well, no matter where we are in the legislative cycle.

Districts need to keep schools open and pay teachers no matter how many students are out with the flu. Of course know chronic absenteeism is a problem, and is isn't all due to illness. It costs schools more to work to solve that problem, reduce absences, and address learning loss. Basing funding on attendance asks schools to do more with less when students are absent - it just doesn't make sense.

Thank you for your time, and for all your efforts on behalf of Texans.

Rebecca Eby
Self, youth minister
Richardson, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rebecca Eby, I am a parent/community member in Richardson ISD in Richardson and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from RISD state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students. For example:

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- Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Jennifer Williams
Self
Austin, TX

School Districts all over the state are suffering with huge budget deficits because of the state underfunding schools since 2019. With no increases for inflation, \$10 billion has been cut over the past six years. Houston has a \$250 million deficit, Austin \$120 million, Dallas \$160 million.

- Governor Abbot and Mike Morath are saying that schools have the most money they've ever had. That's false. They're using numbers from two years ago that include extra federal funding that came during COVID. That funding is long gone. And there's a good chance that federal funding that Texas schools depend on will shrink over the next several years.
- The truth is that school districts are \$1,300 per student behind where they were in 2019 in real dollars.
- The legislature has the money to bring our schools back to the level of funding in 2019, which was considered adequate. You need to fund \$1,300 per student in order to get to this point. Adding the funding to the basic allotment would be the most fair solution across all school districts, rather than telling districts how to use the funding. Different districts have different needs.
- The current funding bill (HB2) has an increase of \$220 per student. While better than nothing, it does not even come close to keeping up with inflation. School districts will continue to fall further behind.
- Texas schools continue to be in the bottom ten for school funding. While we brag about being the best state for business, people will not stay if there is not a first-class school system.

Darian Lloyd

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ali Smith, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

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Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Gregory Bosley

self

Austin, TX

Texas must increase the basic allotment by \$1,386 just to keep up with inflation. The proposed \$220 increase is a cut to our already underfunded schools. Our students and educators deserve better.

Lorilee Bland

Retired Texas public school teacher.

Eules, TX

The allotment for each public school student needs to be raised substantially!! \$220 is a joke. Fund Texas public school children now!

Jason Light

Teacher

Nevada, TX

Jason Light

2611 Sunset Bay

Nevada Tx 75173

Jlight44@hotmail.com

3-6-2025

The Honorable Brad Buckley

Texas House of Representatives

P.O. Box 2910

Austin, TX 78768

Dear Representative Buckley,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the current state of teacher compensation in Texas and to advocate for a significant increase in funding to better support our educators. Teachers are the cornerstone of our state's future, and it is critical that we invest in them accordingly.

Currently, the average teacher salary in Texas is approximately \$62,000. However, after accounting for inflation, a raise of 9% would only bring the average salary to \$67,580. Even this increase would still leave Texas teachers below the national average, which is unacceptable for a state that prides itself on educational excellence and economic growth.

As a concerned citizen and someone who believes deeply in the importance of education, I ask: Would you recommend a job to your family member if the pay was below the national average? Should the expectation of Texas be to merely match the national average in teacher compensation? Or should we strive to exceed that, ensuring we have the highest-quality educators in our schools?

Research has shown that teachers remain in the profession when they are compensated fairly for their work. If we are to achieve better outcomes for students across the state, we must make an investment in qualified educators. These outcomes are directly correlated with the quality of the teaching workforce, and attracting and retaining qualified teachers requires competitive salaries. In looking at the growth of Maintenance & Operations (M&O) funding over the last two decades, while teacher salary funding has stagnated, we find a concerning trend that leads to insufficient pay for teachers. Based on these findings, I propose an increase in the basic allotment per student by \$1,843. This increase would result in an additional \$10.3 billion in funding for Texas schools and would bring the average teacher salary to \$71,900, a more competitive and sustainable figure.

I urge you to consider this proposal, which would not only help retain our teachers but also ensure that Texas schools continue to excel academically. The future of our state depends on the success of our educational system, and that success starts with the people who educate our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing your response and hope that we can work together to improve teacher compensation and ensure the future success of our students.

Sincerely,

Jason Light

High School Shop Teacher

Wylie, Tx

Andrea Elizondo

Self

Hutto, TX

I am a mom of a son with dyslexia and ADHD. He is in 3rd grade in Hutto ISD. We finally established an IEP for him in the Fall of his second grade year. I have seen first hand the benefit of these additional services. I greatly appreciate Chairman Buckley's intent to increase funding for our public schools. This bill is a great start but, there is more work that needs to be done. I want to ensure that there is funding not only for our classroom teachers, but for all positions in our public schools. While I certainly understand and support the research that a qualified educator in front of our students make the biggest impact on our student learning. It's also true that all positions make an impact in our student growth. Without the hard work of the interventionist working with my son on a daily basis, he would not have the level of growth that he has had this year. Without the enrichment of subjects like art, music, and P.E., our students wouldn't be able to explore other areas of learning throughout the school year. All those working in our public schools are a critical resource in the education of our students. All employees deserve to earn a working wage that reflects their knowledge, worth, and effort. I am urging the committee to please make funding for public school education a priority. We need to close the SPED funding gap, fully fund previous unfunded mandates, and give our educators a pay raise. I am respectfully asking that we increase increase the basic allotment to account for the rise in inflation (earmark at least 40% to be spent on pay raises), add funding to close the \$1.7 billion funding gap in SPED, and add enough funding to pay for the unfunded safety mandates from previous sessions, such as police officers on every campus. Thank you.

Philip Winter
Self, construction
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Philip Winter, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

What is a COLA's cost?

State contribution rate needs to be increased!

Inflation is decreasing the purchasing power of retirees.

What if 18.5% contribution was based on actual salary rather than state minimums?

Tracy Winter
Self, entrepreneur
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tracy Winter, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Frank Netscher
Self - web developer
Austin, TX

Teachers deserve at least as much as you are going to reduce public school funding by

Lauren Ferrell
Self
Allen, TX

Increase allotment more than \$220!! We need more money per basic allotment. Our teachers deserve better.

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

Texas is last among states in the rate of contribution to retirement benefits.

Sherri Holmes

Self

Grapevine, TX

This is the bill that will increase the Basic Allotment, the vital funding needed to run our schools day-to-day operations. In the last several years GCISD has:

- Raised the M&O tax rate
- Failed to provide teacher & staff raises this school year(despite a tax increase)
- Cut specialized programs from almost every elementary campus
- Eliminated block scheduling at the high schools
- Lost dozens of teacher positions

With vouchers proposed to be \$10,000 and the current Basic Allotment at \$6,120, I would argue that the Basic Allotment should be increased \$3,880 to also be at \$10K for the students at public schools.

The Basic Allotment needs to be raised substantially to save our schools--not the \$220 currently proposed.

Please take care of ALL of the students in Texas.

Kristin Shelton

self

Austin, TX

As a public school teacher in Texas with 33 years experience, 32 in Texas, I am excited to see conversations regarding raising teacher pay. I ask that you raise the basic allotment to ensure that all public school staff members in Texas receive a raise. I do not support increasing funds to TIA because I am not eligible for TIA right now and it saddens me to see other teachers get a considerable increase in pay as I continue to work without such an increase. I see some proposed pay increases for years of service. As I understand it, that increase would be for two years and then either the next Legislature will have to decide to fund that again or school districts would have to come up with those funds or school districts would lower the amount of pay we would receive. This does not seem like a good idea as it does not continue to fund the pay increase. I do support using 40% of any increase in the basic allotment to go towards a compensation increase.

Courtney Fryman

Self / Advocate

Fort Worth, TX

Texas hasn't increased the basic allotment for public education since 2019. This allotment needs a minimum \$1,340 per student increase to keep up with where it was 5 years ago. Yet, HB 2 proposes only \$220 more per student. This amount needed doesn't even take into account the needs of students with special needs, a 504 or IEP. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 of per pupil spending and is among the worst states for school funding. Texas has a huge financial surplus in the billions. There is so much discussion around "our future workforce" and while I don't like to refer to my child or her friends as "the workforce", it's who they will become. Current spending on public education clearly shows that Texas doesn't want an educated "future workforce" and Texas students, families and teachers deserve better!

Monica Newton, Ms

Self

Austin, TX

I'm firmly against taking public tax dollars away from public schools to be given to unaccountable private schools. Texas public schools are in crisis because legislators have been withholding funding, pushing unfunded mandates, and using a flawed "test" to measure success for decades. You should be raising the basic allotment to at least \$7500 and giving school districts the local control to raise teacher pay and pay for curriculum and programs to meet the needs of the students of their communities.

Kelley Olson
Self/Homemaker
Austin, TX

I am a parent of 3 Austin ISD students, 2 of which receive Special Education Services. I am asking you to show your Texas Pride and support Texas Public Education. For my family private schools are not an option, my 2 sons have Autism-private schools do not have to support children with Special Needs. I volunteer in my children's schools, I see how dedicated our public school teachers are to their students and how they give so much with so few resources. Giving more money to public schools is a preventive measure-if we put more money into education now then we will spend less on other programs later. I want my tax payer money spent on Texas Public Schools.

Heather Pate
Self
Austin, TX

My name is Heather Pate, and I am a graduate of the Texas public school system. I am also a parent of two children currently enrolled in Texas public schools. I have actively volunteered in our schools for the past 8 years, and have seen the impacts of budget reduction firsthand.

One of my children attends a public magnet middle school here in Austin, and our other daughter attends our zoned neighborhood school. We are grateful that our district offers school choice, and our children can flourish in the public school environment best suited for their learning school needs. The teachers within our schools have built trust, built their confidence, and encouraged them to grow. I see the teachers and administration at both of my children's schools showing up on the evenings and weekends supporting our community of children, which means SO much for any kid, but especially both of my kids. Our elementary school has given both of my children the opportunity to become bilingual speakers. Our middle school has ignited a passion for theatre for my daughter, and provided a diverse group of friends that have become her community.

At both of our schools, I have seen firsthand what underfunding has slowly done within our schools and in the classroom. Our middle school sports uniforms are woefully old and outdated - there aren't any funds to replace these. Our school has had 2 fires in the last 2 years, and a flooded hallway. My child's math teacher left during the middle of the year to relocate and transition to a non-teaching job, as the cost of living in Austin became unaffordable on a teacher's salary. Several other teachers have left after 1-2 years of teaching, burned out and pursuing better financial opportunities. Why are we doing this to our teachers?? The same people we trust to help grow our children both academically and socially? It doesn't make sense. Losing teachers because they haven't been adequately financially compensated for the job they perform doesn't make sense if we are working towards a goal of having a top educational system in Texas. In corporate America, we pay people for performance. We adjust salaries for inflation. So why aren't we doing the same for our teachers? Why aren't we adjusting for cost of living and the rising cost of building maintenance?

I am asking for this Committee to increase the funding for our public schools by at LEAST \$1300 to account for inflation since 2019. In reality, Adequately funding our public schools is a start to helping Governor's Abbott's goals of making Texas's educational system the BEST in the country. Making this investment in our Texas public schools is important, not only for our students, but for future business and commerce growth. Let's fund our schools, pay our teachers fairly, and let's provide ALL children of Texas with an opportunity to be successful.

Thank you for your time!

Andia Yazdani-Beioky

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Andia Yazdani-Beioky, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

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Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Neufeld

Texas Mom

Austin, TX

Thank you for your attention to the State of our Schools. I am a Texas mom who is passionate about public education and deeply concerned with the state of my children's educational experience in Texas. The amount of money our PTA needs to raise (due to the state's underfunding of public schools) in order to have a thriving elementary school is shocking and frankly unworkable for most neighborhoods with fewer resources. What's worse, without much needed funding and in spite of voters agreeing to a local tax to help make up the difference, if something doesn't change, the school district's deficit will continue to grow. This is untenable as there is nothing left to cut but the most essential services. Texas should be eagerly investing in the education of its 5.5M public school kids not withholding funds and issuing unfunded mandates that drain our schools' resources.

I know my teachers are working hard and my district is financially responsible. I also know we have not seen a significant increase in student funding since 2019 and are still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite additional expensive mandates and double digit inflation. We have a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

I understand there are House and Senate bills that propose directly supporting teachers but I ask you to raise the basic allotment by at least \$1300, instead. This would give a much-needed and long-delayed \$10 billion dollars of investment in our children and their futures. We have the money. This is a critical investment in the future of Texas that I want my state government to make.

Raising the basic allotment gives our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve AND it gives districts the opportunity to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage amid funding that hasn't kept up with 2014 dollars. Those folks deserve the dignity and respect of a livable wage and our teachers and students deserve that additional support.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I will be paying attention relentlessly through this legislative session to ensure our schools get the funds they need to meet the needs of our children and all the people who support them before sine die on June 2, 2025.

Sincerely, Jessie Neufeld

A concerned Texas mom

Joshua DeVries

Self - data analyst

Austin, TX

I strongly urge the rejection of this bill. Shifting resources from public schools to private schools will destroy the public school system that is critical to maintaining America's excellence and giving opportunities to all Americans, not just the wealthy or the few lucky ones who can get into private schools, including so called "charter schools" which is simply another name for the same thing. Do not allow the elite of society to leave behind everyone else who has built this country.

Abby Burnham

Self, Public School Teacher

Austin, TX

Dear Esteemed Representatives,

My name is Abby Burnham and I'm both a parent and teacher in the Texas Public Schools system.

I know first hand how important our local schools are for the wellbeing of my community. Unfortunately, since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars.

We need to help our public school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. Additionally we should move funding to be based on enrollment, not attendance.

This would still allow for enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Sincerely,

Abby Burnham

Gwenda Caby, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Gwenda Caby and I am a teacher at Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rebecca Alsup

Self, parent of children in public schools

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rebecca Alsup, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dorothy Shelley

Self:Retired Teacher

Austin, TX

I am writing to express my concern for HB2 and HB3.

HB2:This bill seems designed to mislead the public on purpose.It is a thinly disguised windfall for the charter schools and further erodes our critical need for public education in Texas.The \$220 proposed per student allotment falls short of what is needed. There needs to be a figure closer to \$1,340 per student to make a real difference. The charter schools would be able to claim \$220 per student from the state and another \$289 for student allotment through the charter facility. It would be unfair that charter schools would get double what public schools would receive for student allotment.HB2 is being proposed to simply placate Texans so that they will be in favor of having the voucher bill pass.Passing HB2 will not only increase our taxes but it will dismantle public education.

HB3 is not in the best interests of Texans and is being presented in a very misleading way. Rural communities will be hit hard by this voucher bill by losing out on public school funding and having a limited(or none at all) access to a charter school. Special Education services will be hit hard statewide by the charter schools being able to pay for Special Education services from public school funds-further eroding funds available for special education students and families attending public schools.There will be none,or very little,accountability on how the Special Education services will be administered at the charter schools. State wide testing in public schools will not have to be followed with the same accountability as with public schools. There is no measure in place to hold charter schools accountable for showing academic progress for students attending the charter school from grade school through high school.

I retired as from a career as a Special Education teacher after 25 years of teaching in the public schools in Napa,California.The students who required Special Education services did not receive the same minutes written into their IEP's as their peers did in public schools nor did they receive the services they qualified for in their IEP's.Parents signed waivers to attend charter schools recognizing these same services would not be available or at a reduced amount of minutes.

I am urging a vote of no on both HB2 and HB3.

Thank you for taking my remarks into consideration.

Peggy Gentry

Self

Austin, TX

The foundation of the success of the United Nations is a strong public education system. The Legislature has seriously damaged public education in Texas as it has played politics with our childrens' future in an effort to impose vouchers. In order to get back to where funding was in 2019, a per student allocation of \$1300 is needed. This is the very least you should do. I remember that when oil prices tanked several years ago and created a difficult time for balancing Texas' budget, school funding took a large hit. That money has never fully been replaced. So, I repeat, restoring student funding to 2019 levels is the very least you should do. I also note, while not the subject of this hearing, the Legislature is looking at decreasing property taxes, the other major source of school funding. I can only think the Legislature is trying to kill public education.

Kathy Lane
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathy Lane, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD (SBISD) in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures for SBISD reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

One of my children received Special Education services that saved his life. His anxiety and depression were so high that he was at risk for self-harm. Special Education personnel helped prevent that by ensuring he got the tools and support he needed to succeed in the classroom. He is in college now; however, without Special Education services, the story likely would have been very different.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment by at least \$500. Increasing the Basic Allotment allows school districts to put the money where it is most needed for their specific district. Every school has different needs. A Basic Allotment increase gives the school districts the autonomy to make decisions that best fit their schools' needs. Flexibility in spending is essential to best practices.
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration. -Kathy Lane

Nancy Reyna, Ms.

Self

San Antonio, TX

My name is Nancy Reyna and I have no children in Texas Public Schools. I am a product of a public school student who graduated in 2015. I discover my passion to serve my community has been with me since I first started volunteering in high school in my school's library. I enjoy seeing that I can make a difference in someone's life and I have carried that with me all throughout my work and serving my community. I've been reading in my local paper and talking with teachers about all of the cuts that will affect schools in my area. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone.

Already, we're seeing schools close, school programs going away and other support for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors, teachers, staff and librarians.

I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars.

Here's my recommendations:

Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding.

Catherine Acker

Self

Austin, TX

Increase the basic allotment by \$1340 to \$7500 per pupil

Index the basic allotment to inflation

Roll teacher funding into the basic allotment

? Teacher Incentive Allotment in addition, not a replacement for adding teacher funding to basic allotment

Move from attendance-based funding to enrollment-based funding

Fully fund all existing and future mandates

Reject vouchers in any form

Reform recapture system

Stop this bill!

Lisa Chambers
SELF/24 year Educator
Dublin, TX

Well Sir, here we are again with yet another attempt to sabotage public education and public school finance. Whenever you are ready....any day...any time...I'd LOVE for you and your colleagues to come and live a week in my shoes as an educator. I proudly teach 6th graders at Stephenville ISD! I differentiate for them when they are given a standardized test; counsel them when they come to school from broken homes; reach out to parents who are barely surviving, let alone care if their child comes to school or not; and provide food, glasses, and clothes from my own measly paycheck. All the while sitting in the glass castle, our lawmakers create a fictitious narrative about how public education should be handled and financed. Public educators have voiced over and over that vouchers will not fix our system. And yet, the glass is so thick from where you house in Austin that you turn your faces and ears away from your constituents. You know...you know...YOU know that public education in Texas needs your help! Why not, for once, rise to the occasion and do the RIGHT thing and FUND public education like it should be funded?? My students have learned more about government in the last two years while watching and hearing me call representatives to work and make decisions on their behalf. Once again, I implore the House to FUND public education in Texas--the RIGHT way!!!!

Emily Kaszczuk
Self/parent
Leander, TX

I am a parent of two children who attend public school in Leander, TX. Our district, Leander ISD, has announced a significant budget shortfall. Their remedy is staffing reductions for the upcoming school year. Over 200 positions would need to be eliminated. In my school, this could mean fewer positions per grade level, increased class sizes and fewer support staff such as counselors, librarians, and aides.

At this time, our school is seeing an overwhelming lack of substitutes. To solve this dilemma, classes are combined whenever a teacher must be absent. The students are divided into the remaining teachers' classrooms. Today, that means approximately 20 kindergartners are divided by 5 other classrooms. I'd like you to imagine that instead, one teacher position is eliminated and class sizes are larger, 24 students. The state of TX mandates that kindergarten classrooms should have no more than 22 students, but the school can, and will, file for an exemption.

In this instance, each teacher (4 remaining) would need to receive 6 additional students bringing their total to 30. This would happen each time a teacher is absent. There is not space for 30 students in the kindergarten classroom. One teacher cannot attend to the needs of 30 students individually, therefore the quality of instruction decreases and student safety is diminished. Now imagine that this happens repeatedly over and over and over again for the entire year. Next imagine that two teachers are sick, or one is doing professional development and a second gets sick. The class sizes skyrocket!

Increasing public school funding can address both the need to eliminate teacher positions AND the substitute shortages. Our school districts should have the funding necessary to retain qualified teachers AND to incentivize substitutes through higher pay. Teachers need to be able to take leave when they or their children are sick and participate in professional development without jeopardizing the education and safety of their students, our children.

I ask you to please fully fund public schools. Our children's futures depend on it!

Thank you.

Emily Kaszczuk

Self/parent

Leander, TX

I listened to today's hearing and was struck by two things: the first is that Texas has a budget surplus and the second is that school districts are reporting widespread deficits. I'd like to explore these issues.

Does HB 2, as it is currently written, seek to add \$4.5 billion dollars to public schools? If not, public school funding should be increased by at least that much. That increase should be done in the form of an increased basic allotment, based on enrollment, so that school districts can choose how to use the funds to improve the quality of education for their students. Districts (and teachers) are telling you that current funding is insufficient. The basic allotment should be increased by at least \$1300 to adjust for inflation and then increased even more to meet the needs of each district.

Currently the state is withholding funding that is available and calling it a budget surplus. This would be akin to our state facing widespread famine and the legislature stockpiling and withholding wheat, instead of distributing it to bakers to make bread to feed the hungry. The state of Texas is willfully starving public schools. I listened as Texas teachers told you that they must choose between paying rent and buying groceries. They are telling you that you are literally withholding the funds they need to eat! Your constituents are telling you that the problems in public education stem from a funding deficit. The solution is to use the state's surplus to fully fund public education.

Dawn Spivey

SELF

Georgetown, TX

I'm a parent representing the school district of Liberty Hill ISD. I have two daughters that fall under the dyslexia umbrella. Texas should increase the special education funding for all school districts to close the gap and to further improve the education quality for all Texas children.

CHRIS WOMACK

Self, writer

Austin, TX

As a parent of Texas school kids — and the son of a Texas teacher and guidance counsellor — it is galling to see schools suffocated by restricted funding.

But HB2 is too little, too late. We need a per-student funding rate exceeding \$1,300, since our state needs to compensate for many years of shortfall, and that level will only bring us back to 2019-equivalent funding.

Without good public schools, we will become the ignorant backwater of Texas's stereotype. It's a stereotype I've fought against all my life, and I see this as more of the same struggle. You have the ability to keep Texas better than its reputation, improve its global competitiveness, and ensure we've got a workforce and citizenry ready for the future. Quality public education is also a basic necessity for every functioning Western-style democracy. Do not let our kids — and Texas itself — down!

Beverly Kiser

Self

Leander, TX

I am a fourth generation Texan. I went to public schools K-12 and then a public university. My three kids also went to Texas public schools. Our schools are so underfunded and there is money available that isn't being used. I am vehemently opposed to giving ANY public money to private schools. Our teachers and students deserve to be fully funded. The allocation needs to be increased and NO money should go to private schools.

Sarah DiMaria

Cedars International Next Generation High School

Austin, TX

My name is Sarah DiMaria, and I am a Math Teacher and Instructional Coach at Cedars International Next Generation High School in Austin, TX. As a PAEMST Awardee and an educator of 11 years, I am committed to ensuring all students—regardless of background—have access to high-quality education. Thank you for the opportunity to address the critical issue of school funding and HB2.

The Urgent Need for Increased Public School Funding

Texas' per-pupil funding has remained stagnant since 2019, despite inflation and rising costs. Our state ranks among the bottom 10 in per-pupil funding nationwide, leaving many districts struggling to provide essential resources.

I witness the consequences daily. This year, my school reduced staff to cut costs, leaving vulnerable students underserved. A spending freeze prevents me from ordering basic classroom supplies like pencils and calculator batteries. We cannot afford to repair broken sinks, faulty AC units, or dimming classroom lights. Teachers are stretched thin due to staffing shortages and stagnant wages. A 2024 Rice University study found that 73% of Texas schools are underfunded, with under-resourced schools more likely to receive a "C" or lower on the TEA Accountability Model. Research shows that a 10% increase in per-pupil funding raises graduation rates by at least seven percentage points. If we want students to succeed, we must invest meaningfully in public education.

HB2's proposed per-pupil funding increase—from \$6,160 to \$6,380—is a step forward but remains inadequate. Lawmakers must increase funding further and ensure adjustments keep pace with inflation.

Policy Recommendations

I urge the Texas Legislature to:

Further increase per-pupil funding beyond \$6,380 to meet rising educational costs.

Adopt an enrollment-based funding model for stable and equitable school funding.

Increase teacher salaries to address shortages, improve retention, and enhance student outcomes. A 10% pay increase has been linked to a 5-10% improvement in student performance.

HB2 presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Texas students deserve a well-funded, equitable education system—not privatization efforts that deepen disparities. I urge you to prioritize investments that uplift all Texas students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nancy Simoneau

self / former teacher, retired

Clyde, TX

Please keep the National Board Certification as a pathway to TIA at the recognized level in HB 2. These top teachers deserve to be able to get financial recognition for their hard work and efforts to become master teachers. As someone who has a heart for education, I want to see Texas become a state with great schools and great opportunities for students. We cannot do that without attracting the best teachers.

Colleen Garland

self - Outdoor Learning Specialist

Austin, TX

We need a \$1,300 per student increase. All Texans deserve high quality public education, show us you prioritize our students and your constituents by fully funding public schools and getting us out of the budget crisis that the legislature has created.

LeeAnne Hilsabeck

Self

Austin, TX

I do not pay taxes to support private schools. Private schools are not subject to any oversight. My district is looking at losing ~\$30 million dollars if the voucher program goes through and thousands of students will be hurt. Mark my word - if this bill passes Lege leadership will be replaced.

Amy Moore

Self/ bakery owner

Houston, TX

Please consider increasing the basic allotment by enough to keep up with the demands of inflation and increased costs of everything. Spring branch ISD really needs at least \$500 increase in basic allotment. We also need increased funding for security. Our district has done a great job hiring police officers and keeping our kids safe, but we had to use a significant amount of our budget to fund that. We also ask for increased funding for transportation. Kids in our district are sometimes on the bus for over an hour to get home, and we need to hire more drivers.

David Sherrill

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Sherrill, a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

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Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

North Montrose Katy, Rais

Self

Houston, TX

Texans on a bipartisan level DO NOT support this bill. This is a bill to the benefit of banks and a detriment to parents/students educators. This is big government and will make private and charter schools subject to big government. This is NOT fiscally conservative and if the Texas Constitution prohibits the people from voting on it, I urge you to vote NO on HB2 for the people you represent.

Debra Beck

Self retired

Austin, TX

I am grandmother to children in Texas public schools. In regard to this bill, I am requesting that the allotment per pupil be raised. Please reject ANY for of vouchers in Texas. This is essential — Our future depends on strong public school systems, both in cities and rural areas. Instead of using an attendance based allotment, school funding should be enrollment based. Support and retain our public school teacher by increasing salaries and benefits across the board. The U.S. has depended on public schools to educate our children for a very long time. Without strong public schools, we will have a less educated populace. Thank you for your time.

Stacy Maag

Self

Katy, TX

I'm urging you to properly fund public education which every Texan is entitled to in our state constitution. No to vouchers!

Marlow White

Myself

Austin, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marlow white, I am a community member in Austin ISD in Austin and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from public school state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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- **Transportation:** The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Challie Sherrill

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Challie Sherrill, a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Erickson

self

Austin, TX

Hello,

My name is Amanda and I am a parent of two children attending public school in RRISD. Our district has been woefully underfunded to the point of asking parents to bring in tissues for the classroom to use, running out mid-year, and asking the parents again to bring in more tissues. Teachers are working 2 jobs just to make ends meet when we have a budget surplus of over 30 billion dollars. The increased allotment in the bill is insufficient to meet the needs of our 5 million school children here in Texas. The last increase to the allotment was in 2019 and with high inflation, we should really be increasing the allotment by at LEAST \$1300, if not more. Texas is towards to bottom of the states in school funding, and it shows for a parent point of view. Historic inflation as increased school supplies by up to 20% which means with the current allotment, we are at a 13 year low in inflation adjusted dollars. While it has been stated that there are other parts of the bill that will increase funding in different areas, why hamstringing our districts by having mandates on the spending? Why not let the professionals in the districts determine what is needed for their schools? If you haven't worked in education, you shouldn't be mandating money is spent in very specific ways. All of these bill are just work arounds to what is really needed, which is just to fully fund our schools. No more beating around the bush, and promising pennies on the dollar. Unless the real reason we are doing this is to dismantle public education for a private system? Pay our teachers, fund our schools, or get out of office.

Katie Spence

self

Austin, TX

I am writing as a mom of two kids who attend public schools. Public school teachers are so important to the future of this state. Public education is the engine for economic development and we should fund it as such. Currently our public schools are operating on a shoestring budget. Please raise the basic student allotment by \$1300/student. It hasn't been raised since 2019 despite the cost of everything going up in price during the Covid pandemic and after.

Please treat our public education system as the important economic development resource it is. Our teachers deserve it, our kids deserve it and the future of Texas depends on it!

Katelyn Damore

self, bilingual content interventionist

Austin, TX

My name is Katelyn Damore, and I am a bilingual content interventionist in Austin, Texas. I have been an educator for ten years, working with students who need targeted literacy support to build the foundational skills necessary for academic success. I am writing in support of increasing teacher compensation in HB2 but to also highlight how the bill falls short in ensuring fair pay for all educators.

Every day, I work with students who are reading below grade level, providing small-group and individualized instruction to help them succeed. One of my students, Arturo, came to me at the beginning of the year struggling to recognize basic words. By working together consistently, we made incredible progress—by mid-year, they were reading full sentences with confidence. Moments like these are why I stay in education. But the reality is that many teachers doing this critical work are not recognized in the state's compensation structure.

Since I am an interventionist, my position does not have a state-approved evaluation system under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). Unlike teachers in tested subjects, I don't have a straightforward way to "prove" my impact through standardized measures, even though my work directly contributes to student growth. Without a clear pathway to increased pay, interventionists, specialists, and other support staff are often overlooked and undervalued in performance-based compensation models.

HB2 makes an important step forward by increasing the basic allotment and expanding performance-based incentives like TIA. However, these policies do not go far enough. I urge the committee to strengthen HB2 by ensuring that all teachers—regardless of subject, role, or grade level—receive meaningful base salary increases.

Performance-based pay does not include all educators. Many teachers, including interventionists, bilingual specialists, special education teachers, and instructional coaches, do not have a designated state evaluation model that allows them to access TIA bonuses. Relying primarily on performance-based pay leaves many critical educators behind which can be disheartening when the same work is required without the same compensation.

Teacher retention is a growing crisis. Across Texas, low base salaries are driving experienced teachers out of the profession. Many educators take on second jobs or leave, even when they love teaching. An increase in base salaries would help keep dedicated professionals in the classrooms. Students need stability in their schools. Each time a teacher leaves, students lose consistent, high-quality instruction. Retaining teachers through competitive base pay ensures that students receive the support they need year after year.

While HB2 makes progress in funding education, it does not do enough to support all educators fairly. I respectfully ask to prioritize higher base salaries in addition to performance-based incentives to ensure every Texas teacher receives the compensation they deserve.

Tania Tasneem

Self

Austin, TX

My name is Tania Tasneem, and I am a Texas public school educator.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB2 and any similar voucher bills that divert public funds to private and homeschool education.

These bills do nothing to address the severe funding crisis in our public schools. Instead, they prioritize private institutions that lack accountability and enrich billionaire donors like Tim Dunn, Jeff Yass, and the Wilks brothers—all while Texas public schools are left struggling with unlivable teacher salaries, understaffed special education services, skyrocketing transportation and maintenance costs, and unfunded safety mandates. Districts across the state are grappling with deficits.

The basic allotment for Texas public schools has been stuck at \$6,160 per student since 2019—while inflation, district costs, and student needs have soared. If lawmakers are serious about supporting education, they should prioritize HB351, which would increase the basic allotment to reflect inflation.

Every student deserves a fully funded public education with a qualified teacher in front of them. Right now, that is not the reality in Texas. Veteran teachers are leaving. New teachers aren't staying. Schools are being forced to do more with less every year. Instead of funneling public dollars into unregulated private schools, lawmakers should focus on fully funding public education—the system that serves 5.5 million Texas children.

I do not support any form of education savings accounts or vouchers and I will encourage my friends, family, and colleagues to do the same. Texas public schools deserve better.

Fund our schools like the backbone of society that they are.

Respectfully,

Stephen Simoneau

self/retired teacher

Clyde, TX

Texas is ranked 29th in the U.S. in education. I believe that in order to improve our educational system we must find a way to increase the quality of our classroom teachers. National Board Certification is the way for teachers to improve their professionalism and therefore improve the quality of their students' learning. I ask that you keep National Board Certification as a pathway to TIA at the recognized level. Anyone that can achieve National Board Certification has proven themselves as a master teacher with expertise to help support all students in their classroom. They deserve to be recognized as a master of their craft and receive financial incentives through TIA.

Tracey Reap

Self

Fulshear, TX

Why are public schools getting over \$3000 less than private schools. The increase in this bill is less than inflation, does not help with unfunded or underfunded mandates such as 504, safety, transportation, etc. After reading the bill, you give some to SPED students, a small token to teachers but nothing like the private allotment. I do not understand why you are punishing public schools. The Governor is trying to spin the numbers by adding grant, federal dollars and other sources to make it look like public schools get more than they do. These dollars have strings attached and very strict spending guidelines. As a math major from Tex's A&M, your numbers don't add up.

Noelita Lugo

Self

Austin, TX

While HB2 has some good provisions such as certified teacher requirements, allocation for special education funding and pre-K expansion, it does not provide sufficient adjustment to school funding. The writers of the Texas constitution embedded public education as a constitutional right because they understood that Texas would remain strong if our citizenry was well-educated. However, the state has failed under this Governor and Lt. Governor. The state is not fulfilling its obligation to Texans. Increase the basic allotment by \$1340 --at minimum. Move away from attendance-based funding to enrollment-base funding. Stand against the private school entitlement program -otherwise known as vouchers. Pour effort into reforming the recapture system so that public education is funded in a sustainable and just manner. Use your moral compass, visit your local public schools, listen to families and educators and it will become clear that Texas' future depends on a strong public education system and a strong public education system depends on a vastly improved funding model. HB2 falls short, but it can be improved with amendments. You have the power to do right by generations to come.

Dana Hermelin

Self - Tax Manager, JLL Real Estate Capital

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hermelin, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lyndsay Lovell

Self - stay at home mom

Keller, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lyndsay Lovell, and I am a parent/community member in Keller ISD. A lifelong Republican voter, I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from the state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, fine arts programs, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with extremely limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

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- 4 Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
- 5 Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs.

When did public education become disposable? It certainly is a necessity for my children and our community. Public education is the most important investment we can make in the future and I urge you to do right by your constituents, many of whom voted for you and trust you to act in the best interest of our children.

Jill Nokes

self

Austin, TX

I urge all legislatures to oppose HB3 School Vouchers. This bill will further erode the state's support of public school education. Vouchers do not help rural districts where options for private education are limited or non-existent. For many rural communities, losing their public schools will cripple a main employer in their town, and eliminate one of the most important institution that foster community bonding and purpose - its young people Charter schools do not have to adhere to the strict standards of operation and the outcomes for students that most schools must comply by. And for what? A diminished presence of long established institution in their town, (along with sports, libraries, and other benefits. It may further the slow but steady emptying out of small rural communities, and only hasten the decline of these small towns. Public schools have always been the foundation of our democracy. We have failed at making sure that every school is provided with the resources they need to offer every child in Texas a decent education, but at least the schools are still there. Let's please not follow neglect with complete abandonment.

Kelsey Ahern
Self, Engineer
Austin, TX

My name is Kelsey Ahern and I have three children in Texas Public Schools. I have been volunteering in my daughters' schools for years and see how important our local schools are for the well-being of my community. I have also seen first hand the impacts of increasingly significant budget cuts that my local school is having to make because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched and observed so many districts across the state facing similar budget shortfalls, I've learned that it is really a state problem. I was shocked to learn that since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after-school programs go away, and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

I've also read that the State of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. This would still leave Rainy Day funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. We pride ourselves on the robust Texas economy driving growth and opportunity across the state. The booming Texas economy is the envy many around the world! Texas businesses expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding.

Please restore funding to Texas public schools this Legislative session. Texas students - the state's future workforce - is counting on you!

Max Lane
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Max, I am a community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Debbie Krawl
Self, Public school teacher
Cedar Park, TX

I'm glad our representatives are able to afford private schools and tutors for their children, because most Texans cannot. Public schools need more funding - more than you're considering. The needs of our Texas children are diverse, and it's expensive to differentiate instruction for our heterogeneous learners; I wish all of you would spend a day in a public school to understand why public school teachers are so vocal this session. As Colin Powell said, "Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership." Please show public schools that you care and can help us. Your future in politics may depend on us!

Ellen Gibbs

self; retired; proud State of Texas (UT libraries) employee

Austin, TX

I would like to urge the committee to promote a much larger increase in the basic allotment per student than the proposed \$220.00. Students and teachers are struggling. Our public schools are foundering because they have been underfunded for years and years. \$6,380 is still not nearly enough. Texas can do better!

Aria Dean

Self CFBISD Staff member, Council PTA member

Carrollton, TX

My name is Aria Dean and I have children in Texas Public Schools. I have been volunteering for years and see how important our local schools are for the wellbeing of my community. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians.

The state of Texas has an immense amount of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs. I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

April Dunning

Self, Educator

Fort Worth, TX

The legislature has the financial capability to restore school funding to the levels established in 2019, which were deemed adequate. To achieve this, an additional allocation of \$1,300 per student is necessary. It would be most equitable to incorporate this funding into the basic allotment to benefit all school districts rather than prescribing how districts should allocate the funds, as each district has unique needs. Currently, the proposed funding bill (HB2) includes an increase of \$220 per student. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not adequately address inflation. Consequently, school districts will continue to face funding challenges. Texas schools consistently rank among the lowest in terms of funding. While we pride ourselves on being a leading state for business, retention of residents is at risk without a high-quality education system.

Dina Hill

self

Rockport, TX

My name is Dina Hill, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a (taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee). I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Lori Maldonado
London ISD
Corpus Christi, TX

My name is Lori Maldonado, I live in Corpus Christi, and I am a school employee in London ISD. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for insurance alone is more than \$606 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Sara Hyder
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you

Cole Glosser

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

Austin, TX

Hello, my name is Cole Glosser and I'm a Peer Policy Fellow with the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD), a cross disability advocacy organization ensuring that Disabled Texans can work, learn, play, and thrive in their community of choice. CTD is in favor of HB 2, however, we strongly urge the removal of the State Supported Living Center (SSLC) provision, as an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting is not the appropriate setting to discuss the institutionalization of a child, and the Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authority is the most knowledgeable source of information for learning about an SSLC placement. Students deserve the right to be educated in their communities, and this provision would harm that principle.

A benefit of the bill that we strongly support is the transition of special education funding from a classroom placement model to a service intensity model, which will better tailor to the diverse needs of children who utilize special education services. We additionally support the creation of the grant programs geared towards schools serving children with autism and dyslexia, as it will allow schools to invest in specialized services for these student populations.

Kaylee Konidis

Self - Teacher

Groves, TX

As a teacher I do everything I can to provide the best environment for my students. I use thousands of my own dollars to ensure that my students have all the materials that they need to be successful at school. That ranges from extra supplies, math/science manipulatives (that our district does not have the money to provide), extra snacks for our students that are hungry, even buying new items that we need in the classroom. Public schools should NOT BE FUNDED BY THE TEACHER, the state has an obligation to help make sure that every school has the BEST funding to help them run and be successful. Teachers are also working more than their contract hours, drive by any school before 7am and after 5pm, I guarantee that you will see teachers still working in their classroom to make sure that their students are taken care of and that they are prepared for the next day. How is it fair that teachers are working 2 or more jobs OUTSIDE of their main job? How is it fair that teachers ARE LIVING PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK? How is it fair that teachers cannot even provide for their family? How is it fair that teachers are PROVIDING THE BASIC NEEDS IN THEIR CLASSROOM WITH THEIR OWN MONEY!? It's unfair to our students that they don't even have a basic allotment from the state that can provide ALL the materials that they need. It's unfair that teachers work longer than they should without being fairly compensated. The state should hold themselves accountable when it comes to supporting the teachers that are enriching the minds of people that may one day hold your office! If you can read, write, solve problems, or even be a kind person THEN YOU SHOULD THANK A TEACHER! YOU WOULD NOT BE WHERE YOU ARE WITHOUT A TEACHER!

Shannon Allen, Dr.

Beaumont ISD

Beaumont, TX

My name is Dr. Shannon Allen. I live in Beaumont, Tx , and I am the superintendent of Beaumont ISD. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier-one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year. Please support this additional allotment.

Robert Huffaker

Self - Teacher

Austin, TX

In regards to HB2, I want to keep National Board Certification as a pathway to earning a Teacher Incentive Allotment. This will encourage teachers to continually improve their craft over time.

Susan Anderson
Justice Network of Tarrant County
Benbrook, TX

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sue Anderson. I am a resident of Benbrook, TX, a teacher educator, and the parent of two public school graduates. I also serve as the chair of the Public Education Team of the Justice Network of Tarrant County. In my area, school districts face budget shortfalls of \$10 million or more, forcing them to lay off teachers and consider school closures. I urge you to increase state funding for Texas public schools. While I appreciate that HB 2 includes increased funding, Texas has the financial capacity to do more, and our students deserve better.

Texas ranks 46th nationally in per-student funding, with the state contributing only 41% of public school costs—shifting the burden onto local property taxpayers. This chronic underfunding has real consequences. According to a study by Wallethub, Texas public schools perform worse than average in key quality metrics, including graduation rates, college entrance exams, reading test scores, the percentage of certified teachers, and student-teacher ratios.

At the same time, inflation has risen more than 20% since 2019, yet school funding has remained stagnant. To simply keep pace with inflation, the basic per-student allotment should increase by approximately \$1,300. However, the current bill raises it by only \$220—far below what is needed to maintain quality education and retain qualified teachers. Additionally, if I understand correctly, the bill could provide a greater per-student increase for charter schools than for traditional public schools, even though charter schools divert funding from the districts that serve the vast majority of Texas students.

A strong public education system is vital to Texas's future. With a substantial financial surplus, the state can fund its public schools at a level that accounts for inflation, meets the needs of students and educators, and aligns more closely with what other states invest in education. Given the additional financial strain posed by vouchers, charter schools, and potential federal funding losses, I urge you to not only preserve the increases in HB 2 but also go further—make a meaningful investment in Texas's future by ensuring that traditional public schools have the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sue Anderson
Benbrook, TX

Sara E Ortiz-Romero, Dr.
None
San Antonio, TX

I am a mother and resident of San Antonio. I am concerned about the upcoming bill.

I support increasing the amount to \$1,300. The current \$220 proposed is not enough. We also need to increase support for Special Education.

I am against providing more funds to Charter Schools. I am against vouchers. I am middle class and the Vouchers do not support my needs.

As a registered voter, I hope you consider my thoughts.

Thank you,
Sara Elena Ortiz-Romero

Mary Selby

Self

Austin, TX

Hello House Committee Members

I understand you are here to discuss and make decisions that will not only affect students in the wonderful state of Texas, but all Texans. I may live in an urban setting today, but I was born and raised in south Texas in a very small town. Daily life definitely centered around our school system. Anything from Homecoming, UIL competitions, and local highschool plays were events all in our city would attend.

As you consider the budget and funding today please consider the following:

--We need the basic allotment increased at a minimum to \$7500. We have not seen an increase since before the pandemic and we are working in a very different and more expensive economic landscape.

--This dollar amount gets us to 2010 levels before the great recession

--A more effective move would also be to move from attendance based funding to enrollment based funding

--Please make sure and fully fund any current and future mandates. I can tell you from first hand experience that our school would greatly appreciate this and need to make improvements, but we were not given anywhere near enough money to work on enhancement to keeping our students in a safer campus.

--Please take a look at the recapture system. Times have changed and it is time to overhaul a system that is not working for many school districts.

Lastly I want to thanks a few teachers in my closing:

Thank you to Mr. Stafford and Ms. Burke from 4th grade

Thank you to Ms. Mac for 9 & 10th grade Biology

Thank you to Ms. Past for all our UIL competitions.

Staci Guillen

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Staci Guillen, and I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Phyllis Ruschhaupt

Self

George West, TX

VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS! I live in one of the 158 counties in Texas that do not have access to private schools. This will hurt the students in my county. I am a retired teacher, daughter of a retired teacher and mother of a current teacher.

Judy Mankins, Ms.

Self/Public School Teacher

Olney, TX

I am a public school teacher who has taught for 29 years. I do believe that the base pay for teachers needs to be raised. I also believe that a teacher who has stayed in the trenches for more than 10 plus years needs to be given a pay raise of at least 6,000 dollars. We are losing teachers due to many reasons and one is salaries. While the cost of living increases teacher's salaries have not. Education is the backbone of our society and teachers need to be treated with respect and compensated for the job they do on a daily basis.

Vicki Goble-Lane Lane

Self

Allen, TX

Vote NO on HB2 ! Vouchers will NOT benefit society on a whole - it is only a handout to the rich.

Suzanne Backus

self / Project Manager in IT

Austin, TX

I'm requesting that the House approve HB 2, a significant legislative measure that aims to benefit public education, which has a profound impact on Texas residents as a whole. Given the scope and importance of this bill, your approval is crucial in ensuring that basic allotment and public school funding is increased for the first time since 2019. While the \$220 allotment per student is ridiculously insufficient considering inflation has grown by approximately 22%, it's a start that can hopefully be increased. Considering Texas is estimated to have about \$21B in surplus for 2025, perhaps appropriation for public school funding, allotments and grants, educator raises, and PreK and early start programs will be addressed finally.

Gina Geohegan
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gina Geohegan. I'm a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you.

Sanya Aliota
Self,consultant
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sanya Aliota, a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. I relocated to this community in 2019 so that my 2 sons could attend the exemplary SBISD schools only to experience the strains from funding shortfalls since. I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tamara Smith
Self, homemaker
Dallas, TX

As a mother of two children with learning disabilities I am pleading with Texas representatives and law makers to prioritize public education. I believe that there are some amazing private schools however \$10,000 is not nearly enough to cover the tuition for these schools, not only that, but these schools are free to discriminate against children with dyslexia, ADHD, and autism. Let's look at what states with the best educational outcomes are doing, which is increasing per student funding for public education, and do that! I am so proud to be a Texan and I would love Texas to be number one for education, there is no joy in having such an economically healthy state if we are not prioritizing the children of Texas.

Megan Rosenbaum
Nottingham Elementary
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Megan, and I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you.

Rachelle Edwards

Self - parent of 3 school aged children
Lucas, TX

Hello, I am a parent of three school aged children in Lovejoy ISD. I am writing to ask for an increase in school funding beyond what HB 2 calls for. Texas has been under-funding our public schools for many years now and the effects of this are becoming dire. Some examples from my small district: we have had to close one of our three elementary schools, have begun charging hundreds of dollars per child for bus service, and had to do major fundraising to try and cover the cost of the school marshals we are required to have on site at each campus. At our middle and high schools, we have been forced to cut an entire class period from the school day, which means our kids have access to fewer classes and reduced educational opportunities. Our teachers are not being compensated fairly and it's increasingly hard to retain them. My sophomore's engineering class didn't have a teacher for the first six weeks of school because it was nearly impossible to find one who was qualified, and willing to work for the small sum our budget allows. We cannot expect to properly educate millions of children, in one of the largest economies in the country, on a shoestring budget that forces us to cut corners. We need to increase funding far beyond the amount proposed in HB 2. I am urging this committee to substantially increase funding for our public schools and invest meaningfully in our children's future.

Amy Pooley, Texas Mom and attorney

Self

Austin, TX

I am a tax-paying mother of three school-aged children enrolled in Texas public schools. I demand more money for public education. Texas public schools have been severely underfunded for years. At a bare minimum, you must raise the basic allotment by \$1340 to get back to 2019 levels. I do not want my tax dollars or my kids to go to unaccountable private schools.

Sarah Gaventa, The Rev.

self

Austin, TX

Please fully fund Texas schools. They need at least a \$1300 increase per pupil. My son has been in public schools in Texas since Kindergarten--he's in eighth grade now and I've watched schools shrink their electives and now AISD is exploring cutting back transportation for magnet programs. (Even though OUR property tax dollars are taken and supposedly given to other districts, but it seems that some are just kept by the State. This is infuriating!) Please invest in our children's education--we want educated, motivated, smart professionals and workers in Texas and we get them through excellent education. Our public schools are filled with incredible teachers and staff doing they best they can with scraps. Texas is flush with cash--send some the way of our youngest and help them fulfill their potential!

Thank you.

Kasey Havens

Myself

Lucas, TX

Please find public education! Great things happening in public schools! Please consider adding stipends for sped, gt, fine arts and other UIL recognized activities!

Jenny Stevenson
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jenny Stevenson, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time.

Brian Bloss
Self, teacher
Grapevine, TX

Honorable members of the Committee,

I am a classroom teacher in the fastest growing district in North Texas. We have been hit by budget cuts due to the failure of additional funds to reach our schools. I wish to tell you the story of how budget cuts due to the current financial crunch have impacted my students and my colleagues. My number one ask would be to please increase the public allotment beyond the \$282 dollars in the text of HB2. While every bit of funding is appreciated, it does not go far enough.

This year, 60% of school districts in Region 11 (the Fort Worth area) have had to go into budget deficits and cut staff due to inflation. The currently proposed legislation simply does not get us caught up with inflation.

To meet budget realities, my district is increasing our current secondary staff to student ratio from 167:1 to 180:1. The problem is that even in a 167:1 ratio, I already teach 203 students. I am well aware that this could mean next year I will have even more than 200 students (6th graders). The problem is that this is not sustainable because if the per student allotment increases by only \$282 dollars, we won't be able to get the paraprofessional staff that are desperately needed to make my work possible. We are witnessing exponential growth in bilingual special education students and even with the money being proposed in HB2, that won't be enough.

These cuts have also led to the elimination of programs like AVID in my district. AVID which was meant to help improve our academic middle and build study skills for students many of whom will be the first in their family to go to college. Sadly with the removal of these programs the struggles of our academic middle have proliferated.

As currently written, HB2 continues to ask us to meet the challenges of teaching in 2025 with 2019 levels of funding. For our district, that means stretching 2019 levels of funding for even more students who were not here in 2019 and we grow at the rate of more than 1,500 students a year. Here would be the preference of how we could make the situation somewhat better for funding:

- 1) Remove some of the barriers that silo money into different categories. While HB2 does target specific silos of money, they create barriers that would allow funds to go to the overall general allotment per student.
- 2) Change from attendance based funding to enrollment based funding. Since COVID the number of families that take long trips during the school year has exploded, not to mention if a child comes down with COVID or another serious health condition the number of days students are missing has increased. As a result, we are being further penalized for issues that fall outside of what schools can control.

Again, I believe there is a good faith effort by this committee to ensure that our public schools are taken care of. I just am not sure that the committee is hearing what the reality of this legislation would mean.

God Bless You all and God Bless Texas.

Gretchen Sowell, Rural Public School Teacher

Self
Three Rivers, TX

I currently teach in a small, rural school. I am asking to please vote "NO" on school vouchers.

Amy Lucas
Self
Houston, TX

As a mom of an public school elementary child and a public school graduate, I ask that the basic student allotment raise by \$1300. Our children and teachers deserve this support, and it's an important investment in Texas's future.

Cassie Schaps
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cassie Schaps, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time.

Maria Elena Ortiz, Mrs.

Self, mother

Fort Worth, TX

I am a mother concern about this bill. Please INCREASE the funding to \$1,300 per student. Please do NOT spend additional funds improving the facilities of Charter Schools. Please do NOT support Vouchers. Charter Schools and Vouchers destroy the middle class. Please support INCREASING Special Education.

Thank you.

Sarah Drummond

Port Aransas ISD Parent, Insurance Agency Owner

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Sarah Drummond, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a taxpayer and parent of a Port Aransas ISD first grade student with special needs. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year. As an insurance agent local to the area, I have seen rising costs affect both our citizens and local businesses. I do understand that the past several years have been a "perfect storm" for insurance carriers due to inflation and reinsurance costs, along with natural disasters throughout the country, but I ask that you please take action to prevent these rising costs from directly affecting our children and beloved school district as a whole.

Tracy Cunningham

Port Aransas ISD

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Tracy Cunningham, I live in Port Aransas, and I am a PAISD Employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Lacey Lake

Self

Austin, TX

It is imperative that the TX legislature funds TX schools adequately. Voucher programs have been a massive failure in all of the states that have implemented them. They are often used not by disadvantaged students who are looking for a better school option, but by wealthy families who already have their children in private schools. Public tax dollars should stay in public schools. Things that you could do to appropriately fund TX schools would be to pay schools based on enrollment, not attendance. And with billions of dollars in our state rainy day fund, you should be increasing the state's portion of the per student allotment. Districts all over our state are having to take extreme measures that are having massive effects on campuses due to the deficits they are running in. The state hasn't increased their portion of the per student allotment in over a decade and definitely not enough to keep up with inflation. Please do better! The future of our state depends on a well educated population and when we are at the bottom of the country in per student spending, we are failing our students.

Katherine Holbrook

Self

Austin, TX

I am glad that the House is increasing funding for public education, but I urge the legislature to increase the allotment by more than a couple hundred dollars. We need to invest in public education. I am a public school teacher and the mother of two public school children here in Texas.

Dirk Bunck
self
Kingwood, TX

Please significantly increase the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensure all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensure all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensure all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

Demesia Razo, Dr.

Self
Fort Worth, TX

The state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs. I encourage you to support public education which serves as the cornerstone for communities across Texas.

Jessica Robbins
Rockport Fulton ISD
Rockport, TX

My name is Jessica Robbins, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee. I have worked in this district as a teacher and administrator for 22 years. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for insurance including windstorm insurance alone is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Melissa Endicott, Dr

Parent

Houston, TX

As a parent of 3 neurodiverse children, I strongly support public schools not vouchers or ESAs. While on the surface it might sound appealing, private schools don't have to accept my kids, can remove them based on their disabilities (and keep their funding), and don't have to provide accommodations or FAPE. Private school tuition would be well in excess of any voucher you provide, limiting the benefit to families already more financially stable and able to afford tuition. Private schools are also not providing transportation, limiting even more those who can benefit. Vouchers are likely to wide the achievement gap and further destroy public schools. Well educated constituents benefit our state and all children deserve to be educated in strong public school.

It's time to say no to vouchers and support schools by fully funding them. We need at least a \$1000 increase in the basic student allotment. It's time to add an automatic inflation adjustment and a cost to educate adjustment. Bring back the early recapture payment discount. Support districts already reducing property taxes using homestead exemptions by allowing full credit for those exemptions in the funding formula.

You have manufactured the "failing public school" narrative by using a poorly written STAAR test, forced unfunded mandates on schools and failed to provide a basic student allotment that our schools need (our kids deserve better than the bottom 10 in funding in the nation). Stand up and do what is right for our kids and not your financial supporters.

Before you vote, I encourage to investigate how many private schools are in your area, the average tuition and added expenses, their application fees (yes!), the policy about kids with disabilities, and exclusionary policies. If you are lucky enough to have a special education private school, consider if they can only address one or two disabilities, their cost and added fees, and how many kids they can actually accommodate (hint- on average about 15% of kids have a documented disability).

I would encourage to listen to the dialogue from your constituents. Deciding that a majority of Texans want vouchers based on one question on a republican primary ballot is not strong support of your viewpoint. Public schools might help you understand a the quality of supporting documentation used to argue your viewpoint.

Sincerely,

Melissa Endicott, DVM, ACVIM

Karey Swartwout

RFEF

Rockport, TX

My name is Karey Swartwout, I live in Rockport, and I am a parent. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each.

Courtney Prochaska

self / SBISD parent, volunteer, substitute teacher

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Courtney, I am a substitute teacher in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
- **Transportation:** The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you.

Romi Lessig

Self/Retired

Austin, TX

Both my children went through Texas public schools from kindergarten to graduating college in the University of Texas system. The level of funding and teacher shortages has risen to a level that I have not seen in my 3 decades in Texas. To have a healthy society and economy, we must restabilize our core funding and fully account for inflation since the last student rate increase. Any voucher program must be targeted to the most needy and **ONLY** after the core funding is restored to appropriate levels so today's parents can have the strong education that my children received in Texas.

Suzanne Rahman

PTA Wilchester elementary and CSA

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Suzanne Rahman, a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you!

Burke Johnson

Self-Student

Rockport, TX

My name is Burke Johnson, I live in Rockport, and I am a student. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Julie Knapp
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Julie, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you f

Craig Campbell
Retired self
Austin, TX

Teacher pay impacts TRS because contributions are based on 18.5% of their salary (8.25% employee, 8.25% state, and 2.0%). So this increases the amount going to TRS.

Texas is last among the states in their level of contributions to retirement for teachers. This should be an embarrassment to Texas and to the Legislature.

Shelby O'Brien
Self/parent of two kids
Austin, TX

Please give an appropriate funding increase to match inflation so that our schools are not destroyed. We love our schools and hard working teachers. We need them to be appropriately funded and they are not right now. There is money available to appropriately fund schools to keep up just with inflation.

Mary Ellen Scribner, Ms.
Self/retired secondary educator
Austin, TX

I recognize that developing legislation to fund our public school system is a complicated task. I have read HB2 in its entirety but am only beginning to center on components of concern. That is why I hope that this week's hearings are just the beginning of the effort to create equitable and appropriately sufficient funding parameters for our state education system—that there will be additional discussions and hearings so that school personnel, taxpayers and citizens, and politicians can ensure that the system established in 1854 by Governor Pease survives and thrives. My entire education from Grade 1 through a master's degree is a product of Texas public schools and universities. Much of my career in secondary education as a classroom teacher or a fulltime librarian was performed in Texas, so yes, the Texas public school system is about the most important institution in my life. From the top, I want to call attention to Section 1.03 which addresses teacher evaluation, meritocracy, financial remuneration, etc. The language in this section brings to mind the fiasco that was known as the career ladder in the 1990s. It was exorbitantly costly in development, oversight, training, and materials. It was riddled with favoritism, nepotism, and discrimination in execution, a perfect example of the "good old boyism" for which Texas is well known. The playing field wasn't level for all campus professionals, i.e., classroom teachers, counselors, certified librarians, nurses, and the numerous coaches masquerading as part-time teachers in classrooms. It was a failure. I see no language in this section of the bill that would forestall a repeat of that situation.

Moving on to Section 1.16 we enter a realm of unreality. California, Texas, and New York are the wealthiest states in the United States by GDP, but Texas consistently ranks in the bottom ten states in education funding. It currently ranks 46th trailing the national average by over \$4,400 per student. The Basic Allotment per student was last increased in 2019 while inflation has increased 22% in the same amount of time. Already completely inadequate at \$6,160, this bill calls for a paltry \$220 increase. Shocking! Average daily attendance is an outmoded factor in formulating the allotment per student. Instead of ADA, has no one considered using enrollment-based funding? Allocating funds based on the total number of students enrolled in a school or district is a much more stable funding model because it is less susceptible to volatility than fluctuations in attendance rates. Covid, measles, and flu epidemics should have taught us something as should have the numerous absences resulting from Texas's volatile weather. EVERY TEXAS states it succinctly, "School districts plan and budget based on the number of students enrolled. Every student must be assigned a campus, classrooms, teachers, and desk space. The school must be prepared to educate every child every school day, even when a child is absent for the

Nancy Collins
self/retired teacher
Austin, TX

As a retired teacher and having taught in both public and private schools, I am a firm believer that vouchers only serve to undermine a vital public school system. Public schools are the bedrock of our society and, if funded properly, provide quality education to all students. Private schools are available to those with means and to those who qualify for scholarships. The amount that vouchers offer to families pays less than half what some Austin private schools charge, so those vouchers are not much help to families of limited incomes. Public school teachers need to be paid a competitive salary in order for Texas to maintain a quality public education system.

Randi Turner

self

Austin, TX

The Texas Education Agency funds Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPD) and there has not been no increase in that funding steam since 1995, despite the increase in expenses to run the programs. Without adequate qualified, skilled educational interpreters, Texas schools will not be able to teach students who are deaf or hard of hearing appropriately, there is already evidence. The TEA report on language acquisition of children 0-8 shows 72.3 %, or 2048 students who are deaf or hard of hearing, are NOT acquiring language at their age level, <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/government-relations-and-legal/government-relations/lang-acquisition-dhh-august-2023-report-finalized.pdf>. The need for qualified educational interpreters is higher than ever, yet the supply is not meeting the demand.

In Texas educational interpreters are required to hold interpreter certification under the Texas Education Code Chapter 29, yet school districts employ “communication facilitators” and individuals with other such titles, who are non-certified interpreters, to interpret for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, skirting the requirement for certification. In February 2024 TEA reported in the 53 RDSPD’s only 68 interpreters held certification while schools used 168 communication facilitators to provide the interpreting function. In addition, 60 positions were still vacant. Meeting the unique communication and related needs of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is a fundamental part of providing a free appropriate public education to the child.

Funding is a big part of this issue. A 2022 Governors Committee on People with Disabilities report <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/disabilities/2022EducationalInterpretersReport.pdf> illustrates the gross pay discrepancy between interpreters working inside vs. outside K-12. Community interpreters can earn double and triple the income they can working in K-12. I am also the Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair for Texas Society of Interpreters for the Deaf and hear from many interpreters that are not willing to work in K-12 because of pay. Please increase the RDSPD funding allocation, targeting the hiring, recruitment and retention of certified sign language interpreters. Feel free to call or email me with questions, randiturner.texas@gmail.com and 512-567-2634.

Lauren Sims
SBISD SFAT
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren Sims and I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. I had students in HISD for two years, and now in SBISD for one year, and I have experienced first hand the cuts that these districts have had to implement due to stagnant State funding in a period of record inflation.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students, but are mandated by the State. We urge you to fully fund mandates. Special education mandates are ~60% funded, Safety mandates are ~10% funded, transportation mandates are ~15% funded and preK is funded for a half day program while a full day is required.

Our state and our students desperately need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500, and allowing for future automatic increases (ideally inflation, but inflation up to a cap to help budget appropriate would also be most welcome)
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. They have already felt the pain of these cuts, and more cuts would continue to jeopardize their education, health and safety. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lauren Sims

Jennifer Ruth
self
MCKINNEY, TX

A free public education is the right of every Texan. A quality public education is the responsibility of those in power. As a teacher for 30 years, I can tell you we are struggling. We have teachers quitting every day. Kids have long term subs who are not certified to teach. Or worse, they have one sub on Monday, a different sub on Tuesday and so on. Public education serves all kids. All means ALL. Students with who are non verbal and in wheelchairs. Kids who are Dyslexic and need a specific instructional program. Kids who have to take care of their baby sister before they walk themselves to school in the morning. This is our most vulnerable population of students. The population that would not be accepted or served at a private school. And this is the next generation of the Texas workforce. Supporting raises for all Texas teachers supports the next generation of Texas workers.

Virginia Fredricks
Self retired
Austin, TX

I am asking that you oppose HB2. It reduces funding for public schools, 159 Texas counties don't have private schools, so they would be left out; and smaller rural schools will be especially hurt.

Kristie Tobin
Self and my children
Houston, TX

???. Please make your voice heard NOW regarding Texas public education and SN2-Private Education Voucher.

go to the following link and make your voice heard TODAY!! ????

<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400>

Here is the wording you can include into the comment section of the link above.

????????????????????????????????

Chairperson and Members of the Committee. My name is Kristie Tobin and I have step-chikdren in SBISD in Houston. I have also paid to put my daughter through private school for most of her 12 years, so I value both public and private education. Now is not the time to cut funding for private schools in Texas. Donald Trump is dismantling the Department of Education as I type sending the burden of educating students back to the states. Texas must adequately fund our public schools and I expect you to do your job for all Texans, but especially our poorer communities. Use your position for good.

Thank you.

Craig Campbell
Retired self
Austin, TX

Elon Musk can receive funding for private education for his 12 or so kids. He is the richest man in the world, but his "income" is zero.

Five hundred percent above the poverty level is too high. Housing vouchers typically use 200% above the poverty level.

Rebecca JAPKO

PART/self

BRENHAM, TX

On HB2

Community for All advocates are notorious for calling for closure of the State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) while ignoring the growing number of young individuals who would benefit from the appropriate and supervised care at a SSLC versus jail incarceration.

Consider the case with HB2's Sec. 29.0056. INFORMATION REGARDING STATE SUPPORTED LIVING CENTERS. A student's admission review and dismissal (ARD) committee would ONLY provide information on State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) to parents with a child in Special Ed being considered for residential placement. The SSLC information would not be discussed with every SPED student.

Question: Why do Community for All advocates want to prohibit lawful residential options from being presented to those who qualify?

Community Advocates are against parental choice. They have informed their followers, "We think parents should not be pressured to consider SSLC placement as a recommendation. We are not opposed to information about Local Intellectual Developmental Disability Authorities (LIDDAs) being provided in ARD meetings. We feel this information should come from an objective third party that will lay out all options."

There are, however, recurring incidents where the "objective" LIDDAs ignore Texas statutes and/or their performance contracts by withholding or delaying information regarding placement at a SSLC as a residential option to families desperately looking for in-state care. If TEA residential facilities are full, then the school district may explore out-of-state residential care facilities. Removing a child out of state from everything familiar to them, carries with it the probability of continued trauma to the student.

The failure of the mainstream community advocates to acknowledge that some individuals on the disability spectrum would benefit and even thrive at our Texas SSLCs is due to their intractable ideology that a one size fits all model of care is more important than the needs of the individual. This ideology is the opposite of person-centered care. Please retain the SSLC information section of HB2 to give parents more choices for their severely impacted child, not less.

Amrita Starche

Self, artist

Austin, TX

Thank you for discussing increasing funding to public schools, something that is desperately needed in Texas public schools, but the proposed funding increase of \$220 is not enough to make a positive impact in our schools. There is a lot of talk about efficiency in government services right now. It is inefficient to knowingly provide an increase to funding of this size, knowing that Texas has more money available for public school funding and that this proposed increase does not even bring us back to 2019 levels of spending power on the current basic allotment.

A well-educated population benefits every single member of society. There are no downsides to investing in our children's futures.

There seems to be some confusion about the inherent differences between private and public schools that has emerged recently. Private schools are not inherently better at educating students. Private schools are inherently exclusionary. They charge huge amounts of money to educate students, and as a result of having more money, they are able to achieve higher outcomes for students. If we invest more in students, teachers, facilities and resources, Texas public schools can start to close the gap in student achievement and outcomes. We have the ability and desire to see all students succeed. We just need to fully fund our public schools if they are ever going to compete with private schools for providing the highest quality education. This should be our goal.

Please increase the basic allotment by at least \$1300, and consider even more to move Texas up in the rankings from 44th in the nation for public school funding in order to make our graduates competitive in the world after 12th grade.

Thank you for fully funding Texas public schools.

Carissa Gonzalez-Prescott

Self

Houston, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause inadequate staffing & lack of effective dyslexia intervention which directly affects my Dyslexic child.

KRISTI LITTLETON, Place 3 PAISD Board of Trustees

Port Aransas ISD

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Kristi Littleton, and I am a parent, property owner, taxpayer, and currently serve as Secretary on the Board of Trustees for Port Aransas ISD. I am writing to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2.

Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties that face continuously increasing insurance premiums, in particular, windstorm coverage. Since 2019, our property insurance premiums have increased by 317%, with windstorm insurance alone costing us more than \$1,500 per student. These escalating costs place a significant financial burden on our district, limiting our ability to increase salaries for teachers and other essential staff.

I sincerely appreciate the inclusion of this allotment in House Bill 2, as it provides much-needed assistance to school districts in these 14 coastal counties.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tricia Berthet
self Contact Center Director and Mom
Manor, TX

I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I adamantly oppose private school subsidies, also known as vouchers/ education savings accounts. I believe private school subsidies are deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. The Comptroller is projecting a large increase in state revenue over the next two years compared to the past two years, and that money should go to fully funding public education, paying teachers more and doing data-based strategies to help kids learn and be successful!

Private schools pick and choose which students to admit and have barriers to entry like transportation. I do NOT want my taxes subsidizing this. Furthermore, without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability- totally unacceptable.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

We elect legislators to represent the interests of their communities. Responding to their communities, Texas legislators have rejected private school subsidies time after time. Please protect the young Texans right to a solid education through well funded public schools- y'all need to do better for our kids.

Amy Moore
Self
Austin, TX

Texas House of Representatives
Committee on Public Education
Public Hearing on HB2
March 6, 2025

Dear Honorable Representatives,

Thank you for your attention and dedication to the children, teachers, and staff of our Texas school districts. I am writing as a Texas mom, taxpayer and voter to ask the Committee to engage in further discussion about the basic allotment increase of \$220. I do not feel this is an adequate increase for such an important funding stream for our public schools across Texas. This is only a 3.57% increase over the 2019 basic allotment of \$6,160, while the inflation rate from 2019 to 2025 is 21.19%. In order for school districts to keep up with inflation, the basic allotment should be increased by a minimum of \$1,305 to \$7,465. This is the minimum increase that will allow districts large and small to balance their budgets against the inflationary pressures they have been dealing with without a raise since 2019.

This basic allotment reaches all districts in Texas; therefore, it makes the most sense to put the largest monetary increase in HB2 towards increasing the basic allotment. The public school districts across the state of Texas are filled with exceptional professionals who have not been given the necessary funding to execute all that is asked of them. I ask you to reconsider increasing the basic allotment by \$1,305 to at least match inflation. This increase would allow all school districts to operate with the funds necessary to do all that Texas expects of its school districts.

Thank you for your consideration,
Amy Moore
2908 Kassarine Pass
Austin, TX 78704

KAREN SELF
SELF, SCHOOL SECRETARY
CLEBURNE, TX

Good morning, My name is LeAnne Self and I am the PEIMS secretary for Grandview Elementary in Grandview, Texas. I am writing to beg of you to vote against the vouchers. I have 5 grandkids and just to think of what this will do to the public school system makes me sick to my stomach. I witness on a daily basis of what the teachers put into their classrooms. It is ashame the amount of money the teachers have to use of their own money for their classrooms and students. The vouchers will only help the rich that can already afford private schools and I can't understand how people can't see this. I've been reading in my local paper and talking with teachers about all of the cuts that my local school is having to make because of budget deficits. At first, I thought it was a district problem, but as I've researched, I've learned that it is really a state problem. Since 2019, the state has not added any funding to schools to take inflation into account, leaving school districts \$10 billion behind this year. That means that my school district is operating with 80% of the funding it had in 2019. I know the school district used federal funds during COVID to cover the gaps, but that funding is gone. Already, we're seeing schools close, after school programs go away and other supports for kids removed. Schools are losing counselors and librarians. I've also read that the state of Texas has lots of funding in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund and in unspent funds from past years. The Texas Tribune says that that amount is about \$50 billion dollars. Here's my recommendation. Help school districts catch up to where they were funded in 2019. That would mean adding \$1,300 per student, which would cost about \$20 billion. You would still have enough funding for lots of other needs.

I can't think of a more important investment than our Texas public schools. Businesses moving to Texas expect strong school systems for their families moving in. But we can't have great schools if they are constantly struggling for funding. Let's fix it now!

Thank you,
LeAnne Self

Kelsey Smith, School Psychologist
Self, School Psychologist
Austin, TX

My name is Kelsey Smith, and I am a proud School Psychologist working in public schools in Central Texas. I am writing to express my deep opposition to HB2. As a School Psychologist, I have seen how our public schools have suffered due to the starvation of funding. School Districts all over the state are suffering with huge budget deficits because of the state underfunding schools since 2019. With no increases for inflation, \$10 billion has been cut over the past six years. Houston has a \$250 million deficit, Austin \$120 million, Dallas \$160 million. Governor Abbot and Mike Morath are saying that schools have the most money they've ever had. That's false. They're using numbers from two years ago that include extra federal funding that came during COVID. That funding is long gone. And there's a good chance that federal funding that Texas schools depend on will shrink over the next several years .The truth is that school districts are \$1,300 per student behind where they were in 2019 in real dollars.

As a School Psychologist, I work with students receiving special education supports, services, and protections through IDEA. They are frequently rejected and/or kicked out of private schools due to their significant needs that the private schools are not required to provide. Any school that receives public funding, which under this bill would include private schools, should have to be held to the same high standard of care for our special populations as public schools. This is not the case in this bill and what it is doing is taking funding from our schools that are here to serve ALL students and giving it to those that get to pick and choose which students they serve. We need to use our public dollars to fund our public schools and continue to supply them with the resources needed to provide high class education.

The legislature has the money to bring our schools back to the level of funding in 2019, which was considered adequate. You need to fund \$1,300 per student in order to get to this point. Adding the funding to the basic allotment would be the most fair solution across all school districts, rather than telling districts how to use the funding. Different districts have different needs. The current funding bill (HB2) has an increase of \$220 per student. While better than nothing, it does not even come close to keeping up with inflation. School districts will continue to fall further behind. Texas schools continue to be in the bottom ten for school funding. While we brag about being the best state for business, people will not stay if there is not a first-class school system.

I also want to share how disappointed I am in the lack of attempt from a large majority of our elected officials to work with local school districts to try and understand the extreme financial struggles they have been put through. It's almost as though you don't want to hear from them because they aren't going to agree with your current bill. Fund our public schools now.

Ashley Hermann

Self

511 Elm Grv, TX

Fully fund public school with NO ESA strings attached. WE DO NOT WANT VOUCHERS OR ESAs.

Listen to your constituents not your donors. Jeff Yass doesn't even live in Texas.

Heidi Gibbons

self- retired

Austin, TX

Please vote no on this bill. These are the reasons I'm against HB 2:

- 1) \$10,000 will not cover full tuition nor transportation, uniforms, extra curricular activities and all the "extra's" at a private school, and you will leave out low-income and middle income children whose parents don't have the "extra" money for the costs. It will make education for Texas students unequitable.
- 2) Instead put the funds into strengthening our public schools for all children of Texas. Didn't you attend public schools? Didn't you get a good education?
- 3) Private schools select who they admit and children with disabilities and will be left out of the system. Again, the amount suggested (\$11,500) will not cover it. As a longtime Texas resident, I want public dollars to help all children of Texas have access to a good education, not just a few. Please vote your conscience on this one and not just how the Governor wants you to vote.
- 4) Private schools lack accountability. There is a reason our Texas students in public schools are required to take statewide tests - so we can judge by the scores if they are learning and hold the school accountable.
- 5) Private schools are known for hiring less qualified teachers. Don't you want ALL Texas students to be taught by the best?
- 6) As someone who has lived and voted in Texas for almost 50 years, I'm asking you to please vote NO on HB 2.

Georgia Polley

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Georgia Polley, and I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. I am submitting this written testimony to urge you to support legislation that addresses critical funding gaps in our schools and ensures our students receive the resources they need to succeed.

State funding allocations for SBISD reveal a troubling reality—our schools are significantly underfunded in essential areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing major shortfalls, placing an immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harming students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allocated \$31.5 million for special education in 2023-24, yet actual expenditures totaled \$53.5 million—leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, while actual costs reached \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the funding gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting necessary safety measures at risk.
- **Transportation:** The state allocated \$1.5 million in 2023-24, while the actual cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leaving an \$8.9 million shortfall. The projected deficit for 2024-25 is \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. To address these challenges, we urge the Legislature to:

1. Increase the Basic Allotment by at least \$500 to help districts cover rising costs.
2. Fully fund special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increase state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expand transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boost investment in early childhood education to strengthen pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for future academic success.

Texas schools cannot afford to continue operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. I urge you to take immediate action to close these funding gaps and invest in the future of Texas students. Thank you.

Trina Martin, Founder
Parents for Arts Education
Round Rock, TX

Thank you Chairman Buckley for including the fine arts allotment in HB 2. Parents for Arts Education consists of art ,music, dance and theater parents and students, a large percentage of which are alumni. As parents of graduates we have no reason to speak up in support of fine arts education except for what we have witnessed in our children as a result of their experience in the great fine arts programs in Texas. The soft skills of determination, communication, creativity, collaboration and time management have been crucial to their success at every turn. Unfortunately we are watching as this generation doesn't get to pick their careers in 9th or even 12th grade, but have to be constantly skill building. The most valuable skills that will always be needed regardless of career path are learned through high participation in fine arts education. The fine arts allotment helps to ensure these courses, and the importance of learning these hard and soft skills, are incentivized even when there are extra costs and stipends, specifically with the performing arts. As parents we don't want to see a future where the only schools that have strong fine arts programs are schools where parents can fundraise to keep them.

Additionally we support the allotments to help with teacher certification. According to data from the Texas Cultural Trust 61% of the elementary fine arts teachers are NOT art or music certified despite the TEKS based curriculum. This is the only point where every student is touched and studies overwhelmingly show an increase in learning through music and art. There is a reason most of us can't pass an algebra test but we can sing songs from our childhood, including School House Rock "I'm Just a bill". Thank you for including both of these allotments in HB2. I am available anytime if you have any questions.

Joseph Marotta
Self, Engineer
Austin, TX

As a father of 2 kids in public schools here in Texas, I'm asking that the basic student allotment be raised by \$1300. The basic allotment hasn't been increased since 2019, and is still using 2014 real dollar numbers, despite inflation! It is short sighted that we are still using 11 year old dollar value to allot money to public schools, especially when Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund. An investment in public education is an investment in the future of Texas, and a raise in basic allotment will give teachers the much-needed boost that they deserve, attracting better and better teachers to the profession. This would also include support staff, such as aides, admins, librarians, counselors, and cafeteria staff, many of whom are struggling with lower-than-national-average wages. I feel we need to increase support for our public schools, and provide a modest investment in the future of this great state.

Amy Woodell
PARENT - SAHM
Austin, TX

Hello, I am a parent of two public school students. My kids have flourished with their elementary and high school experiences so far. Despite STAAR testing, racoons in the halls, old and unreliable air conditioning, these are our community. Their teachers overall have been great They are spectacular at stretching pennies to educate the students. I know my teachers are working hard, and my district is financially responsible. I also know we have not seen a significant increase in student funding since 2019 and are still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite additional expensive mandates and double digit inflation. We have a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

I understand there are House and Senate bills that propose directly supporting teachers but I ask you to raise the basic allotment by \$1300, instead. Not \$220. Fund all forms of education if you must. I am personally against vouchers to schools with no oversight or accreditation requirements, but at least give parents TRUE CHOICE. The choice to continue attending local public schools. Or the choice to attend private or charter schools. Raising the basic allotment \$1300 (not \$220) would give a much-needed and long-delayed \$10 billion dollars of investment in our children and their futures. We have the money. Let's jump up in the ranks of basic allotment per student in the nation to top 15 to be more aligned with our great state of Texas. Thank you

Brandy Routh
self
Pflugerville, TX

Please increase the basic allotment by \$1300 to account for inflation. Increasing by \$220 is not enough.

Suzanne Farrow
Spring Branch ISD Parent
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Suzanne Farrow and I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Linda Hanratty
LWV Tarrant County Texas
Fort Worth, TX

HB2 adds additional requirements to school districts but only raises the basic allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,380. Accounting for inflation would bring the basic allotment to over \$7,500. That allotment should be indexed based on inflation, so the State Legislature doesn't have to deal with this each year. In addition, with the Federal Government planning to eliminate the Department of Education, new state legislation should account for the likely major loss of Federal funds to schools. Texas needs an educated workforce to compete in the marketplace. Shortchanging our schools and teachers results in a less educated workforce that can't meet the needs of a changing economy. My mother would have called it penny wise and pound foolish. Do the right thing and as proud Texans fully fund our schools.

Laura Whiles
self / insurance
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laura Whiles. I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These include:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits. Thank you.

Kendra Zachrison, Mrs.
self
Driftwood, TX

I have two highschoolers in public school in DSISD. I am an active member of the PTA and an advocate for our district. Texas has been failing our children and teachers and I refuse to stand by and watch our Congress fail again this legislative session. While I appreciate that HB2 would increase the basic allotment, the proposed amount is not adequate. It is past time that Texas Legislators prioritize adequately funding our public schools. Full stop. We need the basic allotment to be increased to \$1,340 to begin to make up for inflation and the lack of it increasing since 2019. It is an embarrassment that Texas (who has the 8th largest economy in the WORLD) is in the bottom ten states for per pupil funding and that we are near \$9,000 below the average for teacher salary. The basic allotment must be increased higher than what HB2 proposes. We are in a critical moment in public education, we have got to have a way to pay our teachers more so they stay in the field. Public schools are the bedrock of our community. If our schools fail, our community will too. Now is the time to step up for public education. 5.5 million children are depending on you. Furthermore, I ask that funding be based on enrollment instead of ADA. Work for teachers does not lessen if a child is absent. This would be another positive change to keep more of our tax dollars in our district. Thank you.

Astrid Han
Self, homemaker
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,
My name is Astrid Han,

I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend - our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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[] Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk. We need to provide safety environment for our kids.

[] Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

[] Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

[] Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

[] Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

[] Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

[] Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

[] Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better

Eric James
Self
Fort Worth, TX

The legislature has the financial capability to restore school funding to the levels established in 2019, which were deemed adequate. To achieve this, an additional allocation of \$1,300 per student is necessary. It would be most equitable to incorporate this funding into the basic allotment to benefit all school districts rather than prescribing how districts should allocate the funds, as each district has unique needs. Currently, the proposed funding bill (HB2) includes an increase of \$220 per student. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not adequately address inflation. Consequently, school districts will continue to face funding challenges. Texas schools consistently rank among the lowest in terms of funding. While we pride ourselves on being a leading state for business, retention of residents is at risk without a high-quality education system.

Aimee Ash

Self - Technical Product Manager

Austin, TX

I am the mother of an 11 year old child who attends public school and I do NOT want school vouchers. Educated Texans know vouchers will further destroy public education in Texas and they will also bankrupt the teacher retirement system. No to vouchers today. No to vouchers tomorrow. No to vouchers forever. Rich selfish people can continue to pay for private schools for their children if they wish.

Elliot Brubaker

Self

Austin, TX

NO to school vouchers!! Defunding public education then blaming public education for lack of outcomes is insanity. Give the schools the resources they need to recruit, train and retain top talent and educate our children, then you will see improved results. Vouchers will not solve the problem!

Karlsson Salek

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ali Smith
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ali Smith, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Teri Poon
self - spiritual director
Austin, TX

I am urging you not to move forward with school vouchers. I am the parent of two middle school children, one of whom has low-vision. Private schools are not required to exceed - or even meet - public school standards. There are no accountability standards to ensure taxpayer dollars are effectively spent and students receive an effective education.

Private schools are not required to provide special education services, which means if a student is diagnosed with any disability, including dyslexia, the private school is not required to provide reasonable accommodations.

This is not a good choice for Texans, and will especially harm rural communities that don't have access to private education, but will still be footing the bill for this. I grew up in a rural community in Texas, and we need the funds for public education to stay in public schools.

If you want to fund schools, consider releasing funds from the "rainy day" fund because our students are dangerously underfunded! My 6th grader is in an advanced math class that went the entire first semester without a permanent teacher, relying on substitutes. This was detrimental to her education, even though she has involved parents and other support structures.

Please prioritize funding for our public schools!

Mark Adams
Self, Software Engineer
Round Rock, TX

Good morning,

While I welcome any increase to the basic allotment, I think the increase proposed in this bill is far too small. We have seen significant inflation (~23%) since the last time the basic allotment was raised in 2019. Especially considering the current surplus, I would be in strong favor of increasing the basic allotment by at least \$1400 to something more like \$7560 that properly adjusts for the inflation challenging our schools and educators today.

The students of today are our future and it is important that we support a strong public education system to create an informed and well-equipped public to solve the challenges of the future.

Thank you!

Samantha Lott, LMSW
Texas Social Workers (School/Mental Health)
Denton, TX

Texans DO NOT want vouchers!!! As a school social worker, I see first hand that we are struggling due to lack of funding and resources. Elected officials have done nothing to address the mental health crisis and have enacted policies that only make things worse. Taking funding from schools with exacerbate these issues. Do the right thing for Texans and students and vote no!!!

Traci Dunlap
Self, Teacher
Austin, TX

Chairman Buckley and members of the House Public Education Committee,

My name is Traci Dunlap, and I'm a veteran teacher with 37 years in the classroom. I teach Kindergarten in Austin ISD. I love my students and my school, but over the past few years, as funding has not kept up with our needs, I have seen my workload increase dramatically, while my pay is still well below the national average.

Our public schools in Texas desperately need more funding! We haven't received an increase to the basic allotment since 2019, and the funds we receive have not kept up with inflation. Inadequate funding coupled with rising costs for literally everything has put the vast majority of school districts in our state in a deficit budget. Districts are having to make impossible choices to close schools, cut important services for students, take planning time from teachers, and increase class sizes. Worse yet, in many districts, hardworking teachers and other school employees may lose their jobs.

While I applaud you for separating the school finance bill from the bill regarding Educational Savings Accounts/vouchers, the current proposal to add \$220 dollars per student to the basic allotment is woefully inadequate. We need to add around \$1300 per student just to keep up with inflation, and even this amount would still leave Texas well below the national average.

Over 90% of children in our state attend public schools, and we have a Constitutional obligation to fund them. Please do what's right for our children, families, and communities by increasing the basic allotment to at least enough to keep up with inflation. You are working with a record surplus in the state budget this session! Additionally, please consider adding a provision that would increase the basic allotment automatically, based on inflation, in the future. The success of our state depends on the success of our schools. Adequately funding our public schools should be your top priority this session.

Josh Benoit
Cornerstone Academy PTA
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josh Benoit, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Clark Flinn

Self

Buda, TX

My wife is a Texas public school teacher in Caldwell county, a primarily rural county. The passage of SB2 will gravely undercut the already low funding of our public school districts, especially those that reside in rural areas like Caldwell. Our local community will suffer. Vouchers will only give those already wealthy enough to afford private school a discount. It will not make a dent to those children who are impoverished and TRULY need assistance. We need to put MORE funds towards our public education system in Texas.

Education is a RIGHT for all Texans. Vouchers will cripple many poor and underserved districts, which will slowly choke that right away from many children.

In addition, vouchers will remove critical funding from public schools that employ teachers like my wife. It will drive good, talented teachers out of the profession, or even out of our state, to seek higher pay.

Private schools are PRIVATE. They do not deserve the tax dollars of ALL Texans when they pick and choose what students to accept into their schools. They do not have to serve the ENTIRE community. Vouchers are nothing but a tax payer funded subsidy for the rich.

We already have school choice. SB2 will just make that choice even more limiting. I ask all of the Texas legislature to vote NO against this crooked bill. If our governor is so desperate to pass this, he should put it up for a vote for ALL Texans to vote on. Texans DO NOT WANT SB2!!!

Brandi Stanton

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brandi Stanton and I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better.

ANGELA WARD
Self, Translator
FORT WORTH, TX

HB 2 proposes only \$220 more per student and Texas has not increased its allotment since 2019. This allotment needs a minimum of \$1,340 per student increase to keep up with where it was 5 years ago. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 out of all states for per pupil spending and I believe we can do better than this. Texas has a large financial surplus and it would be great to see it used towards public schools so that our children and teachers get the tools to perform better and our schools can flourish. I have two children in public school and want their school experience to be top notch. Please make investing in public schools a priority. Properly funded schools are not only good for the children and teachers, but benefit the community, the whole city, and the entire state.

Jennifer Drake
Self, CPA
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Drake, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Meredith Loewen

Self

Austin, TX

Please do not funnel public dollars to private schools. This is a giveaway to the rich while our public school can barely afford to fix their toilets. It isn't just teacher pay, it's programs, upkeep. The system for funding is broken and adding school vouchers will only further break it.

Mylie James

Myself

Fort Worth, TX

The legislature has the financial capability to restore school funding to the levels established in 2019, which were deemed adequate. To achieve this, an additional allocation of \$1,300 per student is necessary. It would be most equitable to incorporate this funding into the basic allotment to benefit all school districts rather than prescribing how districts should allocate the funds, as each district has unique needs. Currently, the proposed funding bill (HB2) includes an increase of \$220 per student. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not adequately address inflation. Consequently, school districts will continue to face funding challenges. At the rate the state is going, even its coveted Friday Night Lights are at risk of being slashed in order to secure teachers in classrooms. Texas schools consistently rank among the lowest in terms of funding. While we pride ourselves on being a leading state for business, retention of residents is at risk without a high-quality education system.

Jennifer Stein Stein

Self

Arlington, TX

Increase funding to \$1300 per student. The future of Texas depends on educating our youth!

Jessica Grady

self

Fort Worth, TX

Texas is failing our public school students, teachers and staff. There has not been a basic allotment increase since 2019 despite our large surplus at the state level. HB2 proposes only \$220 more per student - at a minimum it should be \$1,340 per student to keep up with inflation and the deficit in funding support public schools have experienced. Texas deserves better! Despite our huge surplus, we are in the bottom 10 for school funding in the United States. Please do better.

Carolina Ochoa

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carolina Ochoa, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Jerrica Holt

Self, Texas public school educator

Josephine, TX

As a planning committee member for TIA, I have first hand knowledge about the EXTRA requirements and EXTRA funds districts have to have in place to even begin the process that doesn't even pertain to 100% of the teaching staff. This is not the way to go. Please consider an option that is obtainable for ALL. Please see my suggestions below.

As a public educator who lives in your House district, I want to let you know that I support the following recommendations for improving HB 2, which is currently under consideration by the House Public Education Committee:

- Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.
- Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.
- Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.
- Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size Allotment and Basic Allotment. I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I support raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Thank you for your service in the Texas House.

Marty Chapman

Self- parent and speech language pathologist

Houston, TX

My name is Marty Chapman, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Dyniewski

SBISD

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michelle Rea

Self

Austin, TX

Public schools invest in our futures by ensuring we have an educated public. Siphoning money out of public schools and into the wallets of wealthy Texans is reprehensible. The wealthy don't need government handouts to make them wealthier. I could pay to provide my kid with private schools if I wanted, but I believe in my neighborhood and I want my tax dollars to impact the most vulnerable folks in my community. I am furious with Greg Abbot for pushing this scam for so long. Please vote NO on HB2

Tracy Fuhs, Mrs.
Self/EMS-ISD Paraprofessional
Azle, TX

The legislature has the financial capability to restore school funding to the levels established in 2019, which were deemed adequate. To achieve this, an additional allocation of \$1,300 per student is necessary. It would be most equitable to incorporate this funding into the basic allotment to benefit all school districts rather than prescribing how districts should allocate the funds, as each district has unique needs. Currently, the proposed funding bill (HB2) includes an increase of \$220 per student. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not adequately address inflation. Consequently, school districts will continue to face funding challenges. Texas schools consistently rank among the lowest in terms of funding. While we pride ourselves on being a leading state for business, retention of residents is at risk without a high-quality education system.

Charlotte Davis
SELF / Homemaker
Austin, TX

I am a parent with two children in Austin ISD writing to ask that the per student basic allotment be increased by \$1,500. The proposed \$220 is shamefully inadequate and frankly embarrassing that Texas is so far behind the rest of the country in education. Public schools are the lifeblood of neighborhoods, communities, and the backbone of the future workforce in Texas. It is imperative that we properly fund them so our students can achieve their potential. Teachers are leaving in droves, leaving students with sub after sub which means learning is suffering. Electives have been cut, schools are losing librarians and counselors, HVAC systems are antiquated and freezing or sweltering classrooms make learning near impossible. This is a CRISIS, and it's absolutely shameful for Texas to sit on a \$20B surplus while public schools slowly suffocate. Show you care about Texas kids and increase the BA by \$1,500. Thank you.

Erin Gilbert
Self -30 year retired public school teacher
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erin Gilbert, I am a parent, 30 year retired public school teacher, and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students. A bump of \$800 in the student allotment would help a great deal.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students. Considering the population of Houston, these shortfalls are exponentially troublesome.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$800

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas school cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Linda Whitman

Self

Dallas, TX

I am an educational advocate and grandparent of a special needs child who requires daily health care via school nurse along with monthly OT services. He's wheelchair bound for life. He leaves class daily at least 3 times and is still accountable for all his work as a 4th grader. His teachers assist him with catching up. He's served by an OT aide instead of a certified occupational therapist. Funding will change how he's assisted. There is no money for a nurse aide, so when she's out, we have to sit in the clinic waiting on a nurse from another school. He sits in his waste when his colostomy breaks open. He must be cathed at regular intervals. Funding for a clinic aide works impact his life and reduce out of class time while waiting on another nurse.

I've served 47 years and in 70 districts as an educator and advocate. We need significant funding reform. Be the 1st committee to generate a robust general and special Ed fund.

We need to ensure schools are no longer negatively impacted by the disability penalty that Commissioner Morath has addressed. I spoke at the SubCommittee last week and referenced the movie, Hidden Figures, in which Mary Jackson asked a judge to allow her to pursue classes in an unheard of manner. I'm advocating for hundreds of families, along with my own, to more diligently fund for staff, up to date technology, research-based instruction and to no longer leave dyslexia readers to struggle and my grandchild to sit in his feces while waiting for staff.

Be the first and develop a budget to set a new standard. Be the first to set the unheard of precedent that equals or surpasses the judge's decision to allow NASA's first black female engineer to serve our astronauts.

Maggie Steitler

H.G. Olsen Elementary School, Port Aransas ISD

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Maggie Steitler, I live and work in Port Aransas, and I am a PAISD employee and taxpayer. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student which causes inequitable distribution of these resources because of our location. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

William Benoit

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Billy Benoit, I am senior at Spring Woods High School in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve students like me and my younger brother who is an 8th grader at Cornerstone Academy.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize students like me and my brother by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and me and my brother deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Caitlan Zilligen

Self - technical editor

Elgin, TX

I am writing as a concerned mom of a daughter who will soon be of age to start elementary at public school. I'm also the daughter, niece, and granddaughter of multiple now retired life long teachers, and I've grown up watching them do everything they can for their students while struggling due to extremely low budgets at their schools. The basic allotment has not been increased since 2019. It's still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite expensive additional mandates imposed by the government on schools and double-digit inflation. Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

Please raise the basic allotment by \$1300. Please give our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve and districts the opportunity to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage. Do it for the littlest Texans and for the future of the great state of Texas.

Eun-Hwa Ha
Self, Attorney
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eun-Hwa Ha, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas school cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lori Laynes
Self
Houston, TX

My name is Lori Laynes, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Sally Tessler

Self

Austin, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers.

We need to spend money to fix our public schools and raise teachers' salaries.

Becky Holley

Private citizen

Austin, TX

Respectfully requesting that basic allotment fir students in public schools be raised to \$1000 per student

Allison Craig

self, university faculty

Fort Worth, TX

Texas hasn't increased the basic allotment since 2019. This allotment needs a minimum \$1,340 per student increase to keep up with where it was 5 years ago. Yet, HB 2 proposes only \$220 more per student. Texas is among the worst states for school funding, ranking in the bottom 10 of per pupil spending. Texas has a large financial surplus, and as a parent who hopes her children and most of their peer grow up to be workers and citizens in our state, it's confusing to me why we are not spending more on their education. Please stop insulting Texas families by shortchanging their teachers, schools, and communities. As Texans it is time to put our money where our mouths are when we say we are pro family and prioritize the future of creativity, labor, and responsible citizenship in our state.

Jennifer Bigbee, Mrs

Self

Austin, TX

As a parent and twenty year educator, I beg you to please fund public schools. As a state, we have the finances to support a public school program that reaches all children. There is little support for the voucher program, besides a few very right Christian conservatives and their followers. Educators have been doing an excellent job for many years despite the lack of funding provided. We have an obligation to serve children. I am a firm believer that with good, solid, fully funded educations children grow into adults that serve their communities, solve complex problems, and live happy successful lives.

Mandy Menzer

self, parent and clinical psychologist

Austin, TX

Although I appreciate that this bill does provide some support for our schools, it is essential that the Basic Allotment be raised in order to account for the staggering inflation over the last six years since the Basic Allotment was previously raised. As a Texas parent, I have seen firsthand how hard our teachers and school districts are working to support our children. They deserve the resources as well as the flexibility to allocate those resources in whatever ways work best for them at the local level which will not look the same in every district. Raising the Basic Allotment by at least \$1000 to account for inflation is a necessary first step.

Crystal Barnhill
self / Instructional Coach
Fort Worth, TX

All Texas school districts are facing huge budget deficits because of our state's underfunding since 2019. Since 2019, our world and the education system has met unprecedented hurdles. Since this time, our student basic allotment has not increased. This fact has caused great stress on our educational system and has not addressed the facts of the exponential inflation that we are all experiencing in this country and in turn has negatively affected our students. The \$220 increase to the basic allotment, while better than nothing, does not even begin to fully address the issues we face. We need AT MINIMUM an increase of \$1,300 in the basic allotment. This still would place in the bottom 10 of state funding in educational systems. I am a Texan, born and raised, and have great pride in our state. I would like our representatives to ensure that our educational districts have the resources to provide every little Texan with the best educational opportunities available to them. We can not do that without a substantial increase in the student basic allotment.

richard whites
self
houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Richard Whites, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
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4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Adriano Garcia

Self - luthier

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Adriano Garcia, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Alison Adams

self

Haslet, TX

The legislature has the financial capability to restore school funding to the levels established in 2019, which were deemed adequate. To achieve this, an additional allocation of \$1,300 per student is necessary. It would be most equitable to incorporate this funding into the basic allotment to benefit all school districts rather than prescribing how districts should allocate the funds, as each district has unique needs. Currently, the proposed funding bill (HB2) includes an increase of \$220 per student. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not adequately address inflation. Consequently, school districts will continue to face funding challenges. Texas schools consistently rank among the lowest in terms of funding. While we pride ourselves on being a leading state for business, retention of residents is at risk without a high-quality education system.

Judy Rosenblum
self and real estate manager
Fort Worth, TX

I am unalterably opposed to providing vouchers for private school education. I believe that we **MUST** protect the interests of the **MANY** in our state who depend on **PUBLIC EDUCATION**. You give handouts to the privileged with vouchers and you disadvantage those who are most disadvantaged if you take funds from public education.

Christie Stolle
self, high school teacher of 15 years
Cuero, TX

I am concerned about the fact that teacher raises in this bill seem to be directed primarily through TIA. Our district does not participate in TIA since there were concerns that it would unfairly advantage some teachers over others where growth is easier to track and prove. Our district was also concerned about having to spend money on an outside advisor without any guarantee that our TIA information would be accepted. Quite frankly, it just provides another hoop (out of what seems to be a never-ending series of hoops) for educators to jump through to have some shot at a salary that will allow us to live comfortably. I have a coworker who was not able to pay for a full tank of propane to heat her home during the winter: an across the board raise is more than warranted. It feels incredibly disheartening and disrespectful to constantly have to prove your worth in a profession that constantly feels questioned by lawmakers. If state law now mandates that I have mandatory training on packing gunshot wounds, I think a raise that is not tied to my ability to fill out extensive paperwork to back up why I deserve it is more than called for.

Marie Gonzalez
Spring Branch ISD community
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Scott Stone
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas school cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kate Burke, Ms

Sbisd and self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Burke, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration .

Jesse Thompson
Self - healthcare
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jesse Thompson and I am a community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre kindergarten programs.

I urge you to prioritize our Texas students by closing funding gaps and rejecting vouchers.

Annalie Grubbs

Self. Stay at home parent

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Petkovich

self, parent of Spring Branch ISD students

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erin Petkovich, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, and transportation programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students, including my high schooler and middle schooler.

My son, who has a diagnosed disability, utilizes Texas' special education services. The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. There was just a serious safety threat at my son's high school - this is needed funded.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. The bus service is drastically underfunded, leaving kids spending up to 2 hours a day on the bus to/from school, and our district often does not have enough drivers to effectively transport students.

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Erin Petkovich

Mom of two Spring Branch ISD students in 9th and 6th grade

Dorothy Compton

self

Austin, TX

73% of all Texas school districts are underfunded and 17% are severely underfunded. I STRONGLY SUPPORT A ROBUST WELL FUNDED PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT ALL OF US CAN BE PROUD OF

Casey Reed
self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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Nicole McCay
SBISD
Houston, TX

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Daniel Schmidt, Prof.

Self, Professor.

Austin, TX

We are starving public education, and now we're being told the solution is to siphon off what little remains and hand it to private schools. That's not reform. That's sabotage.

Look at HB 2. A \$220 per-student increase that doesn't even keep up with inflation. A funding boost that lawmakers want us to celebrate while, in the next breath, they push school vouchers that will gut public schools even further. You cannot claim to support public education while actively working to dismantle it.

And what do we get for this trade? Higher test scores? Nope. Study after study tells us that students in voucher programs don't perform better. In fact, in states like Indiana and Louisiana, they performed worse. So what we're doing here—the big plan—is defunding an already struggling system to send kids to private schools where they'll actually learn less.

But don't worry, because these private schools are required to accept everyone, right? No. They can reject students with disabilities. They can reject LGBTQ+ students. They can reject anyone they decide they don't want. And what happens to those kids? They go back to the public schools we just defunded.

This isn't about 'choice.' It's about whether we believe in public education at all. And if the answer is yes, then we don't underfund our schools and pretend we're fixing them. We pay teachers enough to stay in the profession. We provide resources so kids can actually learn. We make sure that things like Outdoor School exist—not as a luxury, not as a privilege, but as a given, because that's what education is supposed to be.

We don't fix a broken system by breaking it more. We don't take what little is left and hand it to the people least accountable for the outcome. We fund education because it's not optional. Because we either invest in every child, or we admit that we've given up on the entire idea of public schools.

Chelsea Charlton

Self, Rockport-Fulton ISD Administrative Assistant HR/Business Office

Rockport, TX

My name is Chelsea Charlton, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a (taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee). I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Regina Gutierrez-Garcia

Self - health physicist

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

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Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angela Jenkins

Self, HR Rockport-Fulton ISD

rockport, TX

My name is Angela Jenkins, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a (taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee). I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Nicole Benoit

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicole Benoit, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Lawing

self/Director of Accounting

Rockport, TX

My name is Jennifer Lawing, I live in Rockport, TX, and I am a taxpayer, voter, property owner and school employee. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. My school district is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased substantially since 2019. Our insurance, including windstorm insurance, is \$663 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. While this amount would only add \$160,000 to our annual budget, every penny matters as we face a \$6 million deficit this year and predict something equivalent next school year. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Lisa Maas
Self
Austin, TX

VOTE NO on HB3. I want fully funded public education, not welfare for the wealthy. The legislature job is to fund education in Texas, if the legislature believes the public education in Texas is insufficient they should fully fund PUBLIC schools instead of using tax dollars for private schools.

SARAH Bentley
Congregational Church of Austin, UCC
AUSTIN, TX

This bill was defeated once but elected officials did not listen to the public's voice on legislation that economically will hurt small public schools (155 counties have not private schools to serve parents who chose the voucher option. It also creates Constitutional questions about the separation of Church and State, choosing to favor one segment of the religious community over free choice for families of all and/or no religious persuasion. Listen to your constituents, not your legislative colleagues!

Debiasie Mendoza
Self
Odessa, TX

With the constant pressure of getting teachers into the education field and keeping them in the system; I agree on significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

Candace Franklin
Self
Conroe, TX

My name is Candace Franklin and I am a mom of a dyslexic 5th grader. My son Wyatt worked hard alongside members of the Texas Dyslexia Coalition during the 88th session to pass the Beckley Wilson Act (HB 3928). He came before you last session to and testified about how our school system let him down when it came to diagnosing him with dyslexia and dysgraphia when he was in elementary school. HB3928 helped to correct some of the issues that were causing students not to receive proper diagnosis. As the Lt. Governor assumed when Wyatt met with him last session, he was denied because of money. We were told over and over that the reason his school refused to acknowledge his learning disabilities, was because of money. We didn't know how to prove that at the time. Since then, we were disappointed to learn that kids like my son usually get refused because schools get their funding penalized per student in Special Education.

I am requested the following be done to prevent this going forward.

- Ensure that schools receive the full basic allotment gen ed funds for every students, with any additional allotments added on top. Please edit Code 48.051 to remove the current carry-over language that penalizes school every minute that a student steps out of the classroom.

- Increase the special education allotment funds.

- Transition to a more accurate model with guardrails that capture the intensity (and cost) of services that schools provide to students. Please make the formula make sense because it is old and outdated. Special Education today is NOT the same that it was forty years ago.

Special Education students are just as much the future of our country as General Education students.

Jennifer Ferguson

SBISD

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Ferguson, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better.

Kristi Miller
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you.

Shirlene Justice
Self, Retired
Austin, TX

I am a retired school teacher and administrator, working many years in Austin ISD. In my 40-year career with public education, I have witnessed the slow bleed of support for our schools and teachers. Teacher pay is not keeping up with other professions, and dedicated and talented teachers are leaving the field in droves. The proposed \$220 per student increase in the basic allotment is inadequate to stop this slow bleed. Because of inflation and other factors, we must increase the allocation by a minimum of \$1,300 to reach the level of support enjoyed in 2019. The future and success of Texas depend on the current education and well-being of our public school children. Please support our future by adequately supporting public education now by raising the per student allotment by \$1,300.

Kristi Thibaut
SBISD parent
Houston, TX

I am neutral on this bill because there is a substitute and school districts were not given the runs to know how this bill will affect each district. I can tell you that flexibility is key because each school district has different needs and knows best how to spend our funds. The basic allotment needs to have at least a \$500 increase. Base funding on enrollment and not attendance. Please fund full day pre-k. Its important that our kids are reading on grade level, especially by the third grade. And please make sure that if our school district is required to provide a service, that you FULLY fund that service. I think this bill is a great start. But much work is still needed,

Corey Seifert
Self
Austin, TX

The funding being allocated in this bill is not enough. It does not even make up for inflation. The deficit caused by the unfair recapture program leaves our kids in an educational lurch only to be made worse by funneling of funds to vouchers. Our state leaders must give our students a quality education and this either needs to come from a MUCH higher allotment or a revision to the recapture program. Even when we try and fill the gap by agreeing to pay more in taxes, y'all steal it via recapture. Our kids have no chance at a quality public education (which appears to be the goal of state leadership).

Nathan Franklin
self
Austin, TX

HB2 and HB3 are bad for Texans because they divert public funds away from already underfunded public schools and funnel taxpayer money into private school vouchers, which lack accountability and do not serve all students equally. Instead of investing in teacher pay, classroom resources, and student programs, these bills prioritize privatization, ultimately weakening the quality of education for the majority of Texas children.

Becky St John

Self/housing coordinator

Grapevine, TX

To the Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the ability to submit testimony without requiring a drive to Austin and a day off from work. This is MUCH appreciated, as is your time and efforts during the session.

Without regard for other portions of the bill, which may or may not have merit, I would like to address two specific items:

1. The increase to the copper penny yield--I reside in Grapevine Colleyville ISD which is a long-standing Robin Hood district.

One of the district's legislative priorities is to allow districts to keep 100% of voter-approved funds in the district. So while the yield increase in the bill is acknowledged, it would be even better to allow local tax dollars to stay in local schools, and eliminate the recapture on this local tax increase.

2. The paltry \$220 addition to the Basic Allotment represents a measly .03% increase, and is an affront to parents, taxpayers, and school district educators and staff. Even senior citizens received more increase to their Social Security over the last 3 years. It's long past time for the state to shoulder its fair share, nay--its constitutional obligation--to fund Texas public schools. If vouchers are \$10,000, then public school students should be funded at the same rate, and in no circumstances should vouchers be more than the Basic Allotment. GCISD has eliminated elementary special choice programs; cut block scheduling at the high schools which impacted student rigor, academic offerings, and CTE choices; cut dozens of teaching positions year over year, and forced an M&O tax increase on voters without even giving teachers a pay raise. And none of that even touches in the increase in health care costs or the critical support positions that go unfilled due to lack of competitive salary in the DFW area including bus drivers(who can earn more at the DFW International Airport), facility maintenance personnel such as HVAC mechanics, and that most precious resource, special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Therefore, I urge this committee to raise the Basic Allotment \$3,840.

I would like to caution the committee on one other item, the 40% salary requirement. Every single one of the 1,000 ISDs in Texas is different. The Legislature should not be prescriptive, but trust that local school board members working with the superintendents and staff, know best the budgetary needs of the district.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Angela Scott

Self and Northwest ISD

Justin, TX

Thank you. We we are grateful for an increase public school funding for ALL. However, please consider adding additional funds to the basic allotment and consider funneling all new funding for public education into the basic allotment instead of targeting funding. \$220 is simply not enough. Since 2019, inflation has increased 23% yet the proposal to increase the BA by \$220 represents only a 3.58% increase in that same timeframe. For Northwest ISD this would equip us with enough funds to provide staff about a 2% raise - one time - and then we would be right back where we are facing budgeting challenges, cutting programs, and increasing classroom sizes. Look at and consider the number of school districts across the state who have a deficit budget. This is not a matter of mismanaged public funds but evidence of woefully underfunded schools. In Northwest ISD, we are currently increasing class sizes and implementing program changes in light of a \$16 million structural budget. While we believe in putting kids first, the budgeting decisions we are making are not in the best interest of the kids we serve because we have already trimmed. We are now forced to cut into the core of what makes NISD special and prepares our students for success. This round of budget cuts has been difficult enough and I can't imagine the changes that will happen the next go round ... and admittedly I know that Northwest ISD is in a much better financial position than other school districts. In regards to targeted funding, the formula is already set so that any increase in the BA automatically increase salaries, special education funding, school safety funding, and reduces recapture - so BA funding is already targeted to the legislator's priorities. Beyond those structural, targeted guides school districts need flexibility. Every school district, student population, and community is unique and it is recommended that new monies be placed into BA and not targeted so that every school district can address the issues of importance and concern for their district. Please consider reinstating the discount for school districts that make early recapture payments. Please also reconsider the language regarding the hold harmless laws related to combining the homestead exemption and frozen levy into one allotment and that net that against any increases to funding since 2022. As currently written and understood this would be defunding public education. All the revenue gained could net against the hold harmless for the tax laws that the state has previously promised - creating a supplanting mechanism if left unchanged. The state has a surplus. The funds are there to make a difference for kids and uphold Texas' constitutional commitment to public education. I plead with you to significantly increase funding for Texas public schools and students.

Portia Kelly-Reyes

Self, veterinarian

Austin, TX

As a tax paying citizen with two children in the public school system, I request that the per student funding needs be met to give our children the opportunity to improve the state's poor record in education. The required amount of \$1300 per student should be met by using the state's rainy day funds. My children have been in portable classrooms that have been in use since my husband went to the school over 35 years ago. The AC and heating units have sometimes failed with children experiencing temperature extremes in the classroom. We had to fund raise as a community to replace hazardous playground equipment. The funding for public schools is a direct reflection of the state's commitment to the families and children that are its future.

Tecia Kearns

Self-mother

Mansfield, TX

I agree that public schools need improvement-which is why I believe funding for public schools should be increased. While I want what is best for my own children, I also want what's best for other children as well. As an educator for 15 years, the discrepancy in home life and opportunity between students in a classroom was very evident. I worry for students whose parents either can't or won't access a better opportunity. They will be left behind. I'm also a foster mom of 3 young kids that were in the child welfare system. An important safety net for them and many other underprivileged kids is public education. If vouchers pass-they'll be left in a school system that will be even more short-changed than it currently is. Vouchers don't benefit every child. I believe that parents should continue to have a choice to educate their children as they want (as I did with my 3 oldest), but without diverting funds from public schools.

Hugh Robinson

Self - Retired (but a parent with two children currently in public school and one in private school)

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hugh Robinson, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The current proposed increase of \$220 to the Basic Allotment is not enough. As you will well know, the Basic Allotment has not changed since 2019 (yes, some COVID-related funds were available during some of those years, but those are now gone). Our local public high school has had to make significant cuts to their budget and our district now has notable shortfalls in many areas (Special Ed, transport, Pre-K, etc.). It's clear that inflation alone since 2019 would suggest a far higher increase to the Basic Allotment.

We must invest in public school education so that we properly educate children who can support the businesses that are moving to our business-friendly state; our state needs a well educated workforce and well educated citizens.

I **urge** you to pass a higher increase to the Basic Allotment - it not only helps our kids, but it also makes sense for our state and for the businesses therein. To do anything else is, in my opinion, unwise and short-sighted.

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

It is commonly said that limited resources limit our decisions. In reality, it is our decisions that limit resources. Texas is the 8th largest economy in the world. The money is here, but your decisions limit its availability for education. Investing in education is a great investment in our economy.

Attacking teachers as Marxists and groomers is creating despair among teachers which has to impact their students. It is so sad. Be heroes.

Munir Mirza
Self, IT
Houston, TX

My name is Munir Mirza, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Laurie Duke

Self, parent and former teacher

Ft. Worth, TX

As a parent, I want my kids to keep the teachers that they love and have been monumental in providing a place where they can learn, grow and be accepted. The other day after-school I took my kids to a public playground near us. My daughter struck up a conversation with another child and part of the conversation was my daughter saying how much she loved her school. Her public school. Without the right kind of funding that adjusts for inflation, without the right kind of across-the-board raise in pay (Not TIA) and without an investment in supporting public schools then the school that my kid loves is going to lose teachers. I want all kids to have teachers who want to be there, who are supported and have a salary that helps them stay. TIA in my mind is like saying, we will pay you this base salary to be mediocre, but you can maybe get TIA if you want to jump through hoops to get that extra money because then that means you are an excellent teacher. We should expect EXCELLENT teachers for all kids not just the ones lucky enough to have one. I am no more raising my children alone than any student reaping the benefit of the relationships created by a teacher, counselor, librarian, custodian, cafeteria worker, or office clerk in my kid's school. They are ALL growing my kids together WITH ME. Fund public schools, support public-school employees in the ways that THEY say they need and in no way should charters or private schools come first before the traditional public school. TIA is unfair, it is not a guaranteed raise and our kids are not for sale or for this state's profit.

Amy Filbin, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

We need a \$1,300 per student increase that will get us back to 2019 levels and get Texas schools out of the budget crisis the legislature has created!

Fabiola Mirza

Self, business owner

Houston, TX

My name is Fabiola Mirza, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Paula Phillips

Parent of two boys in public school SBISD

Houston, TX

Please increase basic allotment for students in SBISD public schools by \$500 to help cover basic needs for our students, staff, and teachers for SBISD. Stratford high school already lost block scheduling due to cost cuts for public schools. Please increase funding before other important programs are cut for students in public school. I know there is a surplus of funds in Austin, so please support our students in Texas public schools.

Laura Shah, Mrs

Self

Lucas, TX

Please raise the basic allotment....and by waaaay more than \$220. Value our teachers, students and public education!

Jennifer Espey

Spring Branch ISD Parent & Community Advocate

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee, My name is Jennifer Espey, I am a Spring Branch ISD parent & a co-chair of the SBISD School Finance Advocacy Team. As you are well aware, TX public schools are in financial straits. A recent Rice University Kinder Institute report found that 73% of Texas public schools are underfunded and 17% are severely underfunded, including Spring Branch ISD. It is imperative that impactful and meaningful school funding legislation is passed THIS SESSION to close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing SBISD to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Examples include: Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk. Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school. Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success. We don't mind mandates, but if it's mandatory, please provide the funds to cover the costs. Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but we need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes: 1. Increasing the Basic Allotment a minimum of \$500. 2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities. 3. Closing state funding gaps for school safety and security 4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school 5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success. 6. Give districts financial FLEXIBILITY. Tying funding to very specific items makes it difficult for districts to fund the areas specific to their students & campuses. And remember, Public school funding was held captive by the governor's push for vouchers last session. I urge you to MAKE TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING YOUR TOP PRIORITY this session. Thank you.

Susan Schlueter, Mrs.

Self

Denton, TX

School vouchers are not legitimate! You say everyone will get to choose where they go to school, but how will they get there? People who are poor do not have the time to take their children to school, and they certainly don't have the time when it is not within their bus route. So how is this going to help those who are poor?

Stacey Wong

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

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Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

This

Jennifer Huey

Self, Tax Paying Parent

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Huey, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michelle Tannehill

Self

Princeton, TX

I worked for three years to become NBCT certified in order to make sure that I was highly qualified and as a bonus I would qualify for TIA. The idea of taking that money away is disheartening and will be the death nell for this program in Texas. As teachers, we are constantly vilified when all we do is try to stand in the gap for kids that have no voice. Please don't take this accomplishment away from deserving teachers to save a buck. We've worked so hard and it's time our state had our backs instead of constantly stabbing us in them.

Rebecca Weldon

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rebecca Weldon, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Lance Nall
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lance Nall, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Sincerely,
Lance Nall

Jennifer Young

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Young, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Elizabeth Vanderkolk

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose school vouchers in Texas argue because they divert public funds from already under-resourced public schools, potentially weakening the public education system. Vouchers may not truly expand educational opportunities for low-income families and might exacerbate inequities, and that private schools accepting voucher students may lack adequate accountability and transparency. Additionally, I have concerns about potential constitutional issues, like the separation of church and state, if vouchers support religious private schools.

Candace Myers

self

Austin, TX

Its critical to increase funding for public schools, they are the backbone of our society ensuring that the future voters and taxpayers of Texas are educated and socialized. The more we invest in our public schools the more we invest in the future of Texas. In order for texas to maintain our status as the greatest state in the union we must raise the smartest, most adept critical thinkers. Investing more \$ in schools is a way for us to ensure the future of our great state!

Nikhil Batra

Self

Austin, TX

Yes more public funding! Long overdue and please more than \$220 per student.

DeeDee Haralson
Self, Certified Texas Educator
Cibolo, TX

Dear Texas House Committee on Public Education,
I would like to take a moment to address the topics of teacher incentive allotment, teacher raises, and pay for uncertified teachers. The teacher incentive allotment has a commendable premise; however, it fails to recognize the significant contributions of all educators. While the intention is to retain excellent teachers in the classroom, it is essential to acknowledge that skilled teachers are also needed in various other capacities. As an academic trainer for the Judson ISD school district in San Antonio, my position does not qualify for the teacher incentive allotment since I do not have a class assigned to me. I urge the committee to consider the crucial roles that accomplished teachers play in supporting those who are directly in the classroom. Having been a successful classroom teacher, I now dedicate my efforts to training and coaching current classroom educators. It raises the question of fairness: how is it just that a teacher I mentor can receive monetary incentives potentially derived from my expertise, while I do not receive any compensation for my contributions?

Additionally, there are teachers who provide enrichment and gifted and talented services within our district, yet they too do not have a designated class to qualify for the incentive allotment. I encourage you to explore ways to incentivize teachers in all roles who play a part in fostering student growth.

Every teacher deserves a raise. No profession can thrive without the foundational work of educators, yet we often receive some of the lowest pay relative to our workloads.

Moreover, our district employs numerous uncertified teachers, many of whom are compensated at rates comparable to mine, despite my twenty years of experience. A first-year teacher, who lacks certification, is only receiving \$7,120 less than a veteran teacher of twenty years. They are currently undertaking their preparation program but have not yet achieved certification. It begs the question: why are they compensated similarly to certified teachers who have completed their preparation programs?

As you know, it takes a village to raise a child, and it also takes a collective effort to ensure academic growth for students. This endeavor involves parents and families, district personnel, campus administration, teachers, mentors and coaches, custodians, cafeteria workers, the students themselves, and more.

I believe the committee has the opportunity to devise a robust plan that guarantees substantial raises for all teachers while ensuring fairness in compensation and incentives across Texas.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
DeeDee Haralson

Karla Lopez Bray
Self
Austin, TX

Please fund public education first. Say no to school vouchers!

Karla Lopez Bray
Self
Austin, TX

Please fund public education first. Say no to school vouchers!

Regan Dean, Mrs.
Texas education agency
Missouri City, TX

In my district, insufficient special education funds cause (denied or delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention. Many students have to wait over a year for their reevaluation or an initial evaluation. There's also a lack of teachers to receive them and teach them once they are identified. We need more special education, teachers and diagnosticians within each district.

It is also important to give raises to teachers in order to make the teaching a competitive field. At this moment we are struggling to find teachers and are willing to keep teachers who are willing to stay even if they are not the best. If we made teaching a competitive field, you could easily fire and replace that teacher with someone willing to fight to stay. This is the only way we're going to end up raising the bar for teaching. You get what you pay for. Highly qualified people who are willing to dedicate themselves to students do not want to leave their careers, making twice the amount of a teacher. There are plenty of teachers leaving college and getting jobs to end up leaving teaching to do something that pays more. You need to look at teacher retention along with rewarding teachers first sticking around and doing their absolute best.

zachary Logan
Self
Stamford, TX

Please consider the ramifications of this bill before passing. First and foremost, the legislature has a legal responsibility to provide public education to all Texas students. Public school students are the future of this state. It is an abomination that public schools have been used as a pawn in the nasty public battle for education savings accounts. When properly supported, both financially and legislatively, public schools are highly effective and the best path forward for overwhelming majority of students in Texas. Rather than properly supporting public education, lawmakers have, I believe deliberately, created obstacles that have hampered the effect of public schools and the teachers who have dedicated their life to educating students, simply so voucher proponents can point to the issues of public schools that were created by their own lack of support.

In addition, please consider the impact of inflation since the last adjustment to the basic allotment. To adequately adjust for inflation, the basic allotment should be increased over \$1,300. Increasing the basic allotment to compensate for inflation should be the priority. If lawmakers really want to show support for public education, they should create a policy that automatically adjust the basic allotment to compensate for inflation on a biennial basis.

The next matter of concern is education savings accounts. Does anyone truly believe providing public funds for private education will improve the overall education of students in Texas? I am not aware of significant openings at private schools. It is my understanding that high performing private schools are full. So what schools will use these funds? It is reasonable to assume the biggest impact on Texas education by the passing of the voucher bill will occur at lower performing private schools or unproven startups. Is this the best use of public funds? I think not.

Please consider the needs of Texas students. If you really want to make a difference, increase the basic allotment significantly, provide competitive market based salaries for teachers, and provide support for Texas students.

Patricia Sumrow
Self
Frisco, TX

HB2 fails to meet the needs of Texas public schools, which are in financial crisis. HB2 fails to provide enough money to stop school closures, teacher layoffs, and program cuts. Just to break even with 2019 funding levels, classrooms need an increase of \$1,340 per student. HB2 offers just \$220. This bill is a bandaid on a bullet hole and our kids deserve better. Invest in them and invest in the future of Texas.

Robbie Ausley

Self - retired

Austin, TX

I have two daughters who have been teaching in Fort Bend ISD schools for over 20 years and a granddaughter who is a new teacher in Leander ISD where they have had to lay off teachers last week. Our children, teachers, ISD's, and local communities in Texas deserve to NOT have the funding of our state education held hostage to a Voucher bill. In fact, the committee should NOT be even considering creating an entirely new infrastructure for a 5 Billion \$ program which most Texans do not want, UNTIL they have first fully funded and even raised payments to our public schools. We are 43rd in the nation in what we spend per pupil and that is outrageous in a state so rich, especially when tax money is being withheld to blackmail us into Vouchers.

Nancy Wyman

Self

Fulshear, TX

It is crucial to close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education, these students are our future and deserve every opportunity to succeed, like their peers. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause denied or delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention, etc. I'm sure it's the same in other districts across Texas. Please close the gap so these children are not left behind.

You only need a few sentences to make a difference!

Please submit comments between now and 3pm Thursday bc link expires at the end of the committee meeting.

<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400>

#txlege #txed #HB1 #HB2 #SB1 #SB568

Elizabeth Linn

Self/homemaker

Fulshear, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Kelsey Gates

Parent

La Porte, TX

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In my district, insufficient special education funds causes denied or delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, and lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Katherine Zimmermann

Self

Dallas, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds caused my child and his teachers to not have enough support. In particular, my son didn't have appropriate interventions for dysgraphia, such as an OT evaluation and OT services. His teachers also haven't been trained to recognize or to accommodate dysgraphia. He has received dyslexia services but those could have been delivered better with more staff and fewer children per dyslexia teacher. We need more staff, more training for staff, and more protocols in place for known learning disabilities. Thank you.

#txlege #txed #HB1 #HB2 #SB1 #SB568

Mikki Wittie

self

Lubbock, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, implement a more equitable method for distributing these funds to schools, and eliminate the disability penalty that strips schools of half their Basic Allotment general education funding for most students receiving special education services.

As both an educational diagnostician and a parent of a child identified as needing special education, I witness firsthand the challenges caused by inadequate funding. Specialized instruction is at the core of special education, requiring sufficient money and resources to be effective.

I know you will hear testimony from experts who can articulate these issues in depth, but I urge you to also speak directly with teachers, speech pathologists, counselors, and diagnosticians. They can provide a real, unfiltered view of the current state of public and special education. If change doesn't happen soon, we will lose the very professionals who provide these critical services. We are being pushed beyond our limits, expected to do more with less, and that is simply unsustainable.

Carrie Sheppard

Self

Mckinney, TX

Insufficient funding for special education causes problems with adequate staffing for students with special needs.

Lynda Buckley

Self

Dallas, TX

Texans do not want vouchers. Fund public schools. If you think this is what we want, then call an election and let us, your constituents, decide for ourselves, NOT the billionaires who buy your votes!

Judith Wyble

Self retired teacher

Spring, TX

You will be voted out! We don't want vouchers!!

Brent Wilson, Dr.
Life School of Dallas
Red Oak, TX

Texas House Pub Ed Committee, thank you for thoughtfully considering closing the \$1600+ funding gap between public charter schools and ISD's. Respectfully submitted, Brent Wilson, EdD

Norman Mitchell
Priority Charter Schools
Copperas Cove, TX

My name is Norman Mitchell and I'm the board president for Priority Charter Schools in Temple, Tx. Killeen, Tx. and Copperas Cove, Tx. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way Priority Charter Schools meet the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. Why should they count for less?

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Jennifer StrawnWhite
Self
Keller, TX

I am commenting regarding the Education Committee hearing for House Bill 3 on Tuesday. As a Texas homeschool parent for the past 17 years, I value freedom from government strings and regulations in private education, and am against the expansion of government in the name of "parental empowerment." I would like to ask this committee to please join a LARGE constituency of homeschoolers in opposing "school choice" legislation like HB 3. Thank you!

Joe Carrillo, Citizen
Self Retired worker
El Paso, TX

The bill is terrible. Voucher still means state control. Keep your money and leave home school alone. We do not want your money or your interference. Real freedom is for the parent to decide not the state.

Melissa Sulak
Self
West, TX

I have been in public education for 25+ years. I have served those years in low SES schools by choice. It has been my passion. I beg you to stop the voucher scam. We already have school choice in Texas. Public funds should NOT fund private education. Please do the right thing for the 5.5 million public education students in the state of Texas. Investing 1 billion dollars for 100,000 students does not make financial sense. Inflation has greatly effected public schools. I ask you to increase the basic allotment to meet the needs of public schools. Parents already have school choice. My tax dollars should not be spend on private education. This is not what the majority of Texans want, if you think it is, put it on the ballot. Please stop this insanity.

Frances Hargrove
Long Time Texas Voter
MANCHACA, TX

Texans do not want vouchers. This is true from both sides of the aisle. Greg Abbott and Dan Patrick want vouchers because they are bought and paid for by the likes of Tim Dunn, Farris Wilks and Jeff Yass and others. Vouchers have not proven to be the great success in other states as touted by other sell-out politicians. The real-life evidence is clear. Please work to fully fund our public schools and so NO to vouchers. Our poorest and most vulnerable communities depend on the commitment of our elected officials to serve and protect them. Thank you.

Susan Pintchovski
Self
Austin, TX

As a retired educator and grandparent of a Texas schoolchild, I ask you to oppose HB2. We need to infuse substantially greater dollars (not a measly \$220 per student) for our public education students. Charter schools are a parents personal choice and should be paid for privately by those parents. Don't use our tax dollars for private education. Uphold your moral contract to Texans to fund public education !

Lisa Jaso
Self - Staff Employee a public school
Brownwood, TX

Most of the line items of your bill are very needed and I appreciate the work to support public schools. All those that teach our children should be certified whether thru a CTE program specifically for those that teach other than core courses or through testing. Then ALL teachers need to be paid an appropriate salary. Not just the ones that can jump through the hoops that the schools set. It's not a fair playing ground. Teachers need a wage that allows them to have a single job. Not a main job and two or three side hustles to make ends meet. In addition, those that work at school districts in support capacity, whether it is secretary, custodian, maintenance, security or feeding our children also need a living wage. The time for Texas to support our school system is NOW. It is the MOST important part of our state. Without school, who would work for the amazing companies that come to Texas. We have the wealth of these companies - we have to train our children to be productive both mentally and physically.
Thank you.

Kelli Seay, SLP
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Committee Members and Representatives

I am writing in support of fully funding Texas public schools through HB 2. As an advocate for education, I believe that our students deserve well-resourced schools, competitive teacher salaries, and adequate staffing to ensure a high-quality learning environment.

- Full funding is essential to address growing student needs, improve educational outcomes, and reduce teacher burnout.
- Supporting teachers and staff with fair wages and benefits will help retain experienced educators, ensuring stability for our students.
- Investing in public education strengthens Texas communities and the economy by preparing the next generation for success.

I urge you to prioritize full funding for schools and ensure teachers and staff receive the support they need to continue serving Texas students effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Colleen Rider, Ms

PART / Self/Son

Sherman, TX

Honorable Representative Buckley,

I am the mother of a 23 year old son with profound autism and epilepsy. I was forced to go through the Grayson County LIDDA for housing options. Her lying and incompetence caused my son to receive group home care in two different facilities (one in which he almost died and another where he eloped with no one noticing). It took the Garland, Texas police over two hours to locate my son after elopement and he was found clad only in a diaper in severe distress.

It is imperative that our children and their parents/guardians be given information about and access to the State Supported Living Center as an option for those like my son who require 24 hour supervision and medical care. As a parent, I was never given in an ARD meeting or during any other assessments an option for an SSLC. Please give our most vulnerable Texans a choice. We must have access to all avenues of information for transparency and clarity when making decisions for our loved ones.

Respectfully,

Colleen Rider

Sherman, Texas

Al Zolli

myself

Snook, TX

there is abuse and neglect at the Brenham SSLC

<http://alzolli.com/>

<http://alzolli.com/>

Shawn Walton

self/teacher

Gause, TX

Thank you for considering my comments.

-BA increase of only \$220 per student is a miniscule increase considering it has not changed since 2019. How does this help “provide a basic level of education for the district’s residents” as stated on the TEA website, as well as help pay for staff salary increases (from 30% of allotment to 40%)? I am not a mathematician, but a JH English teacher, however I wonder how this keeps up with inflation and increased costs overall. Will it even have an impact?

-In regards to special education, you can throw all the money you want at it, but if we don’t have staff to make this happen, nothing will change. As well, the number of students qualifying are sky-rocketing. I teach in a rural school, and we are hard-pressed to provide services. Jessica Menking Diem, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Representative Buckley, replied to an email my sister, Dawn Capra, sent on Feb. 21st. In the very detailed email, she discussed special education,

“As he (Representative Buckley) has travelled the state and met with hundreds of schools, students, and families, there remain students who are not/cannot receive the special education services they need because there is not a professional available for that specific therapy in their ISD. In some of the larger districts, there are so many students identified that there are not enough services to go around....The list goes on and on, but the sentiment is the same- the 5% that are not best served by their public school should still be able to access the best education for them.”

The size of the school doesn’t matter. It is the number of students in special education, and the lack of resources to address their needs. This will remain an issue in rural schools because the students do not have access to private schools that may be able to meet their needs. Our 5% will continue to be served in a public school because there are no other options.

-Increasing the TIA is commendable, however, teachers won’t see this for at least 2 yrs in districts that are just now implementing it (we are in the process, any payments won’t be seen until summer of 2027). An actual salary increase would be helpful, and not just a small increase that would occur from the 10% added onto the basic allotment.

-As you look at education bills, please think about this – much has been said about parental rights. Keep in mind that parents have always had the right to see what their child is learning, reading, etc. Teachers would LOVE to have more parental involvement. But what we see are parents who have abdicated their RESPONSIBILITIES as parents to the schools. Behavior problems are the norm, and teachers have very little recourse to deal with a violent student, or even a disrespectful student, and parents are not stepping up to provide the discipline needed from the home. Your focus should not be “parental rights”. It should be “PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.”

- To educate a child, you must meet their basic needs – shelter

William Logan Burton

Self and RFISD

ROCKPORT, TX

Please support HB 2 to increase funding for public education. It is nowhere close to what it needs to be but at least it appears to be a start in the right direction. As you know, the BA has remained at the exact same amount of \$6160 since 2019. The proposed BA increase from \$6160 to \$6380 represents a 3.6% increase since 2019. During this same period of time, inflation has averaged 3.6% per year, for an accumulative amount of 23.4%. Over the past 5 years, Texas legislators have pushed more unfunded mandates onto public schools while also raising performance expectations. This demonstrates that Texas legislators actually expect school districts to provide more services, produce better results and yet, do it all with less resources. Its amazing to me that the leaders of our state have not yet addressed this huge public school funding crisis and that it never seems to be anywhere near the priority list. Here are some things that should be considered: Increasing basic allotment sufficiently so that schools can compensate teachers competitively with other professions and help attract more talent; considerations for increased insurance expenses along the Gulf Coast (ie, windstorm), complete restructuring of the finance system including recapture (ie, Robinhood), and Texas needs to stop taking school tax dollars away from tax payers where it is used to fill the state's general fund coffers. School tax dollars should be used on schools.

Sayda Morales
Futuro San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

My name is Sayda Morales, and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Herlinda Aguilar, Mrs.
Futuro
San Antonio, TX

My name is Herlinda Aguilar and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

? Public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

? This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

? All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Elizabeth Diebold
Self/Retired
Argyle, TX

Please vote no on vouchers. Our tax dollars need to be spent for our public schools. Unlike private schools, our public schools do not pick and choose students, but educate ALL our children. Public schools are the backbone of our society and our future.

Alison Smith
Self
Houston, TX

My children attend Meadow Wood Elementary in Spring Branch ISD. This year, my daughter has the most amazing 4th grade teacher. She's in her mid 20s and is passionate about teaching and kids. At open house, I noticed that she seemed to know the name and face of every student in the 100+ kid grade. I asked her about it. She said she had been studying their names and faces from the computer for weeks. Not only is she a great math teacher, she is a great leader for these kids. I recently found out that she works retail at night to help her family meet their financial needs. On top of that, she's checking school email when she gets home and working on plans/grading/etc. We have to keep people like this in the profession. We need to increase her pay more than what she would make working retail at every available spare hour. Please work to give teachers a big raise. We have not done enough for them. We need to be able to recruit and retain the best.

Ann Jensen
Self, Retired Texas teacher
San Marcos, TX

My name is Ann Jensen, and I'm a retired Texas teacher from San Marcos. I am writing to both thank you and express concerns about HB2.

My income as a 2nd-grade teacher was well below that of my peers in other states, and was not enough to cover our bills even in a two-income household. My school was in need of repairs that my district, Leander ISD, could not afford. Quite a few of my students had learning disabilities or emotional problems or both, and for the most part I was left to deal with these kids on my own.

I felt unappreciated, overwhelmed and demoralized. I ended up leaving the teaching profession I loved to work in high tech in order to pay for my family's basic needs. Without this career move, we would not have been able to buy a house or send our kids to college, in other words, to live the American dream.

So, while I'm pleased to see teacher pay increases in the bill (desperately needed as my experience attests), those increases should be across-the-board raises. I've read that colleges of education in Texas universities have very low enrollments, and capable teachers like me are leaving the profession. Inexperienced, uncertified teachers drastically affect the quality of our kids' education, so guaranteed increases over time that address inflation are critical.

Also, while I applaud you for increasing the per-student basic allotment, \$220 just isn't enough to make up for inflation since the last allotment increase, which was over six years ago. To keep up with inflation and ensure a quality education for our kids, schools need at least another \$1,000 increase per student in addition to the \$220 in the bill.

This additional increase is critical for special education, bilingual, economically disadvantaged students and students with mental health needs. My last year of teaching, at least three kids in my classroom had significant mental and emotional health challenges, with no one to provide mental health support except me. It was a very rough year and was another reason why I left the profession.

Last but not least, our school buildings need real, sustainable investment—not just incremental fixes. I understand that HB 1275 includes a higher allotment that would help districts better manage operational expenses, and request that the committee look closely at this bill.

Let's give public schools the money needed to provide robust extracurricular programs, to fairly compensate teachers for their hard work, to reduce class sizes so teachers can give students the attention they need, and to hire staff who can assist with discipline and provide mental health counseling.

Respectfully,

Ann Jensen

Rebecca Hendrix, Mrs
Self- public School teacher
Longview, TX

Please help fund public schools and teacher raises.

Abby Berner

self

Austin, TX

Hi there,

I am a life long Texan and a proud product of Texas public schools. I also was a public school teacher in Austin for 4 years. Our public schools need funding and financial support. Research shows that diverting funds to vouchers does not benefit students and their academic outcomes. "When looking at all states that have adopted voucher programs, it is clear that spending for public schools have decreased. That has disproportionately hurt students in higher poverty areas, according to research from the Economic Policy Institute." When will Texas start prioritizing the care of ALL students and not just the care of some? FUND OUR SCHOOLS!! Our students, teachers, and families deserve it. Thank you for your time.

Jillian Hill

self - parent, PTO President, and district volunteer in Coppell ISD

Coppell, TX

I am a constituent in Coppell ISD in North Texas, a district with around 13,000 students. First, thank you for considering an increase in special ed funding. This an area of importance to CISD - in 2024, our district costs exceeded state funding for special education by around \$6.5 million. Please ensure the bill achieves its desired impact - having an annual cap on the maximum amount may prevent it from meeting its intended purpose.

Thank you also for considering the fine arts allotment - Coppell ISD places great value on our fine arts programming, so seeing additional support in this area is much appreciated.

Finally, thank you for considering increasing the basic allotment. However, the \$220 proposed increase is woefully inadequate, even in consideration with the other funding outlined in this bill. Here are a few reasons why:

The BA is the best mechanism to increase educator pay with the fewest strings attached and least bureaucratic red tape. Yet, more attention is spent on expanding the TIA, which increases bureaucratic red tape and limits who will truly benefit. Only 6% of teachers currently qualify for the TIA. A larger increase to the BA would ensure districts would have the means to provide raises to ALL educators, not just those who qualify for TIA. All educators are impacted by inflation, so if changes are desired to the TIA, they should be considered as a separate issue from the BA. You cannot operate under the assumption that with a larger infusion into TIA means we can get by with a lesser infusion into the basic allotment.

With a \$220 increase proposed to the basic allotment, even if the bill's new 40% provision stands, it still does not result in sufficient funding. Here is the math as it relates to Coppell ISD:

BA increase of \$220 per student x 13,000 approximate CISD enrollment = \$2.86 million

40% of that to teacher pay: \$88 per student x 13,000 = \$1.14 million

60% of the increase is discretionary: \$132 x 13,000 = \$1.716 million

Note that a 3% pay raise for faculty/staff in our district costs approximately \$2-3 million per year. This does not leave enough room for our district to address local needs adequately.

HB2 metes out funding within specified buckets, which overlooks the fact that our Texas districts are varied and diverse in their needs. Districts should be given more local control, through a larger increase to the basic allotment, over how they allocate their spending according to their unique needs.

For the above reasons, please consider a larger increase to the basic allotment - it would take \$1340 to bridge the gaps created by inflation since the last increase in 2019. Additionally, please consider adding an inflationary index into this bill to ensure funding keeps pace with future inflation without having to send it back through the legislature each biennium.

Thank you for the work you are all putting into this bill. Please do right by our public schools and increase the basic allotment by more than \$220

Diane Williams
Self
Georgetown, TX

Public Comment Regarding -- HB2 - Public School Funding While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically --. • HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years. • Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer. • Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded. • Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive. • Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas. • Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Valerie Sandham
self
Georgetown, TX

Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.

- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Valerie Sandham
Retired
Georgetown, TX

HB2
HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.

- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.

Geneva Chapin
Self
Katy, TX

Please pass this to increase funding for special needs students.

Sandra Parker
retired NASA
Houston, TX

I am against any type of voucher system in Texas. It is unfair and will ruin our public schools, especially in rural Texas areas. No coach in this State is for the voucher system.

Ashley Palmer
Self - social worker and academic professor
Arlington, TX

I am commenting on HB 2 relating to public education and public school finance. I am glad to see the committee recognizes the need to increase public education funding. I am in favor of increasing the basic allotment per student and other components of the bill seem to strengthen the public education system as well. This increase is long overdue. I ask the committee to consider a more significant increase in the basic allotment per student. The proposed increase in HB2 of \$220 per student is not enough. An increase of \$1300 per student would be needed to keep up with inflation. I would suggest the committee consider a larger increase than \$1300, given that Texas ranks quite low when it comes to funding public education. A recent report by the Albert Shanker Institute, University of Miami, and Rutgers University on adequacy of school funding across the United States found that 91% of Texas public students attend inadequately funded schools. If we can afford what is being proposed to fund private school choice in our state via SB2, it seems like we can afford to increase the basic allotment per student for public education at a higher level. Please consider amending HB 2 to reflect a higher increase in basic allotment per student prior to passing this bill. Thank you.

Jacqueline Burniske
self, retired educator
Austin, TX

I worked in education my entire 40 year career including as a classroom teacher. My children attended Austin public schools. As a Texas citizen and taxpayer, I urge you to REJECT any school voucher proposals that divert public funds away from our public schools. Our state's education system is already underfunded, and taking money from public schools to subsidize private education will only make things worse—especially for rural and low-income communities where public schools are the backbone of opportunity. How do rural communities have school choice? There is only one school.

Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. They can choose their students, set their own tuition rates, and are not required to serve all children, including those with disabilities. Meanwhile, public schools are expected to do more with less. Texas kids deserve better.

I strongly urge you to prioritize strengthening public education—by increasing teacher pay, reducing class sizes, and providing the resources all students need to succeed. Public money should stay in public schools. Please stand with Texas families and vote against school vouchers.

Sarah Swantner
self - mom and community volunteer
austin, TX

I oppose school vouchers in Texas argue because they divert public funds from already under-resourced public schools, potentially weakening the public education system. Vouchers may not truly expand educational opportunities for low-income families and might exacerbate inequities, and that private schools accepting voucher students may lack adequate accountability and transparency. Additionally, I have concerns about potential constitutional issues, like the separation of church and state, if vouchers support religious private schools.

Tonya Garcia-Arnold

Self

Killeen, TX

Good afternoon committee members.

Please do not support any legislation that takes money from public schools to distribute to private and/or charter schools. The systematic dismantling of Texas public schools through defending is unacceptable. Education in this state is under attack and in danger of jeopardizing Texas' ability to compete globally.

Katy Schreur

self - Austin ISD mom of 3

Austin, TX

Thank you for your work representing the people of Texas. Please consider the children you represent in this state when deciding how to fund education. As a mother of three I am deeply concerned about this issue.

Please increase the basic allotment. Not by \$220, but by \$2000.

Our public schools have been underfunded since 2011. According to a Rice University study, 73% of our Texas school districts are in a financial crisis, with some districts closing schools, firing librarians and teachers, and asking hard-working families to continue to carry the burden of funding our public schools through volunteer work, sky-high property taxes, and VATRES.

The investment in public education in 2019 didn't even get us back to 2009 levels, when you account for inflation. We haven't seen a significant increase in funding that didn't come with expensive mandates attached since then, despite a global pandemic and a couple of years of painful inflation that followed.

Our teachers are getting paid \$10k less than their peers in other states; our students are receiving funding that is, in some cases, a third of the resources the children receive in other states; and our counselor-to-student ratios are a fraction of what is recommended by health professionals. But you can change this! You have the power!

Let's get the money back into our schools through a significant increase in the basic allotment. Something that would support ALL the professionals in our schools supporting our children.

Thank you for doing the right thing for the children of Texas!

Staci Thomison
Georgetown ISD
Georgetown, TX

Public Comment Regarding -- HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Allison Vanderwoude
Highland Park ISD Education Foundation
Dallas, TX

Please vote to increase the Basic allotment (BA) to \$6,380 from \$6,160 per student (\$3.2 billion). There has not been an increase in years despite 20% cumulative inflation since 2020. The cost to educate students has risen and our teachers deserve raises in pay to keep up with the rest of the employers in the world. We are going to lose good teachers if this is not fixed. It is a statewide problem. School Districts are shutting down schools or making very impactful budget cuts in order to make their budgets work. This cannot keep happening. Public education in Texas should be a priority, not an afterthought. I also feel vouchers are a bad idea for this very reason. Please prioritize PUBLIC education. Thank you.

Kellie Lewis
self
Austin, TX

- No to vouchers or ESA's
- Raise basic allotment to include inflation
- And change the funding from attendance to enrollment

Margaretta Bedford
Concerned voter.
Wichita Falls, TX

If you give that money to these families then private schools will have to accept any child with what ever accommodations necessary as public schools are required to do. Otherwise , rich families are just getting money to put back in their pockets. We need to compare apples to apples. Also should this pass public schools need to be compensated twice the amount per student to keep our public schools open. Teachers are not paid well and to throw this into their Lapps to deal with this fall out is unfair.

Monique Sanchez
Futuro San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

My name is Monique Sanchez and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Roxana Jones
Self
Pasadena, TX

Our education systems support the future of Texas! It is very important for them to have money to hire the best teachers!

Emily Hermans
self, educator
Austin, TX

As a public school parent, I implore the House to increase the per student allotment by more than the current proposal. Rather than increasing it by \$220 per student, it needs to be increased by over \$1,000 per student. The state legislature has these funds and needs to invest them into our students, our schools, and our teachers. It is deeply disappointing how little is being given to allotted to ensure that future Texas workers and leaders are getting the foundations that they need to learn and grow, particularly given the voucher program that would taken even more funds out of our schools.

Fannie Akingbala

Ebenezer 3rd Baptist Church Social Justice and Advocacy Ministry

Austin, TX

We thank you for your service to your local communities and our State. We know that you strive to improve the quality of education and productivity of those residing in our State and your local communities. Please read and consider our opinions on the issue of Public School Education and School Vouchers. We all need to work together to bring back the focus on a quality and well-rounded public school education system for all children in Texas.

Providing excellence in education for all of the children of Texas is a very serious matter that should be above political reproach. For years the State has failed to provide proper funding for our public schools and further intentional destruction of our public school system will be harmful to all Texans in the long run. The damage and fallout from making this mistake will be felt economically, socially, and mentally for generations come. Some concerns we have with the proposed voucher plan that may negatively impact the children of Texas are as follow:

- It will inadvertently promote further segregation in the school/education system. Many low-income parents cannot afford to enroll their children in private schools even with the proposed voucher program.
- The program will give tax subsidies to upper-income families who can already afford to send their children to private school. Tax payers cannot afford to pay for two separate funding for ed

We need to see more teachers and school staff retention in our Public Schools, and the movement of our State in an upward spiral with regards to providing a quality education for all children in the State of Texas.

Everyone matters and deserves to have the best life experience possible without regards to race, ethnicity, or political preference. Please consider the following:

- Increase the basic student allotment to \$10,000 per enrollee in public schools in lieu of giving it to private schools.
- Decouple student daily attendance and student daily allotment such that schools do not lose funding based entirely on student absences.
- Increase classroom teacher and staff salaries to a comparative level equal to or greater than the median household income in the State of Texas based on experience and level of education.
- Focus on teacher/staff recruitment, training, and retention and talk with teachers about teacher retention strategies.
- Develop wrap-around services for students in after-school programs that assist with the development of social, academic, and physical needs.
- Provide more mental health access and support for teachers and staff.
- Oppose any form of re-authorization of chapter 313 and monitor the performance on the Jobs, Energy, Technology, and Innovation (JETI) program
- Oppose any school-based corporate tax giveaway programs
- Do away with the Schools Recapture Program.

There is a way around the expensive, unpredictable, unaccountable, and profit- driven private school vouchers.

Humbly Submitted

Fannie Akingbala

Nadia Khan

Self

Austin, TX

I'm glad that you are increasing the basic allotment per student.

AAAAAAND we do really need more. I want to see us drain that surplus, to bring teachers, courses, resources, to Texas students who are in desperate need of an excellent learning environment.

Are we meeting the needs of our kids? Please know that we are not. And we've been meeting their needs less and less as the last decade has proceeded.

I'd like to see a discussion of cost of living. And of how that cost of living is taken into account in funding each service and salary.

I don't understand why we are not talking about raising this basic allotment to get us to the national average. I don't know why that is so funny.

I don't know why the State has claimed a surplus, when our schools are heavily underfunded, and our students outcomes are suffering because of it. You might have noticed kids are doing better in schools and school district with larger injections of private donations. That's not just a coincidence. It's a clear linear result of what happens when we fund what's needed. It's not a mystery how to serve kids well. It's a mystery how to serve kids well when we're trying not to spend any money on them. The state can only claim a surplus AFTER it has paid out what is needed to be successful. We aren't there yet.

As a Texan I'd like to be proud of the investment we're making in our kids. Let's OVER fund education.

Love funding fine arts. Love increasing funding, but want A LOT more.

IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK.

I don't know why everyone who is asking you for several more thousand dollars per student, apologizes after asking. It's the decent thing for us all to do. Why is it so hard to support kids?

Let's do this!

Make All Schools Awesome!

Cathy Ewert

self, Educator Brady ISD

Rochelle, TX

Good Afternoon, I would like to comment on the TIA program. I taught at Rochelle ISD for three years, 2019 - 2022. During that time they were applying for and gaining certification for the TIA program. Spring of 2022 the designees were announced; out of a staff of 18 teachers, 6 teachers earned awards. The Principal's wife was named a Master teacher (she had 3 years of teaching experience e

then), the Superintendent's wife was named a Master teacher (despite the fact that she was not certified in her subject at the time), and the Superintendent's sister-in-law was named an Exemplary teacher. Unfortunately, I found I could not live with that and left the district at the end of the year.

I listened to some of the testimony today, 3/6, from teachers for the TIA and I understand where they are coming from. But please do not rely on the TIA to increase teacher pay. In my experience it is very subjective and not fair. Thank you, Cathy Ewert

Lyndsie Smith, Parent, community member, educator

Self/educator

Trophy Club, TX

I do not support the bill as written. The raise in basic allotment is not near enough. Raising the allotment to \$7,500 would adequately support the cost of inflation since 2019.

Heidi lowell Lowell

Self

Austin, TX

I do not support this bill. We should not bankrupt the education system in favor of supporting only the wealthy families. We need to educate all Texans.

Megan Torres

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Megan, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Judy Field
self
Austin, TX

I was educated in a small rural school and oppose HB2. The bill robs public schools, particularly those in rural communities, while supporting private institutes with little to no accountability.

R Stephen Sprowls
Northwest ISD
Ft Worth, TX

The current Basic Allotment is \$6160 and was set in 2019. Since then, inflation has increased 23%. The proposed \$220 increase in the Basic Allotment is only a 3.5% increase during the same time frame. An increase of 3.5% in the Basic Allotment during the same timeframe as 23% inflation is a slap in the face to anyone associated with public education in TX. Just like individual households, ISDs are having to pay more for insurance, fuel, and anything associated with the M&O side of the budget. On top of unfunded and underfunded mandates, how are we expected to pay our workers a livable wage? There are more than just teachers working for ISDs. There are bus drivers, office aides, paraprofessionals, nurses, counselors, librarians, etc. How are ISDs expected to pay for 23% inflation increased daily operations, pay all workers a raise to keep up with their expenses (especially TRS insurance increase) with only a \$220 increase to Basic Allotment. Do the right thing and increase Basic allotment 23% to \$7577.

Audra Marye
self/mom
HOUSTON, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Audra Marye, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
- **Safety & Security:** In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.
- **Transportation:** The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.
- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500
2. Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.
3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Rebecca Fowler

Mental Health America of Greater Houston

Houston, TX

I am writing to comment on House Bill 2, specifically its impact on public education and school finance. We appreciate the historic investments made in public education through this bill, including the fine arts and high school advising allotments. However, we urge the committee to consider adding a Mental Health Allotment to ensure dedicated funding for behavioral health services in schools.

The Safe and Supportive School Program addresses both physical and psychological safety in schools. Physical safety in schools is vital. Schools must also have psychological safety, which addresses emotional wellness, resilience, and access to mental health support.

The School Safety Allotment is intended to fund mental health initiatives in Texas, allowing districts to implement a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Unfortunately, the 2023 TEA School Safety and Security Report reveals that most of this funding is spent on physical safety rather than mental health. Of nearly \$28 million spent, only about \$391,000 (1.4%) was directed toward mental health services. The breakdown includes:

- \$554 for behavioral health services
- \$16,957 for programs addressing adverse childhood experiences
- \$19,997 for counselors, social workers, and restorative justice personnel
- \$128,377 for suicide prevention
- \$225,100 for mental health support personnel

According to the Year 4 Report from the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services, only 13% of schools used the SSA for mental health, the lowest among funding sources. Major sources of mental health funding include: 46% from Title I (economically disadvantaged students); 40% from McKinney-Vento (homeless students) and 35% from ESSER grants (COVID-19 federal funding).

The disparity in mental health funding is not due to a lack of need but a conflict in the School Safety Allotment between physical safety and psychological safety. While funds are used for physical security, such as hiring armed officers, there are no similar requirements for mental health services, like hiring counselors or implementing MTSS.

To address this issue, we recommend the creation of a Mental Health Allotment in HB 2. This allotment would provide dedicated resources for mental health services, ensuring schools have the funds to implement a robust MTSS for emotional wellness and resilience.

Prioritizing professional school counselors, bullying and suicide prevention programs, and strong community partnerships are the core of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) as outlined in the Safe and Supportive School Program. A Mental Health Allotment that helps schools build strong MTSS frameworks would lead to more engaged families and community partners allowing students to access services unavailable within the school.

A Mental Health Allotment would ensure schools do not have to choose between physical safety and mental health, providing consistent funding for both. This is crucial for addressing the mental health.

Melissa Roberts

Northwest ISD

Roanoke, TX

The Basic Allotment is not enough. With a 23% increase in inflation, the \$220.00 suggested increase is just not enough. The cost of Special Education is so high. The proposed changes will do little to impact the lives of so many children. The behaviors and needs of the ever growing special education population is driving our costs up. We are running low on staff and cannot provide them with everything they need.

Alana Gray

Self

Keller, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alana Gray and I am a parent/community member in Keller ISD. I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from the state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, fine arts programs, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with extremely limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs. This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1000
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- 4 Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
- 5 Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs.

When did public education become disposable? It certainly is a necessity for my children and our community. Public education is the most important investment we can make in the future and I urge you to do right by your constituents, many of whom voted for you and trust you to act in the best interest of our children.

Respectfully,
Alana Gray

Aim Hicks

Self

Victoria, TX

As a taxpayer I believe that public funds should only fund public schools and that funding needs to be increased to levels that match or exceed 2025 costs. Based on estimates that would put the adjusted a lot amount at \$1200-\$1500 per student. The Texas economy needs well funded education to have the best workforce available and that starts with public schools.

Sa Nguyen
Self
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sa Nguyen, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katherine Winegar, MPA

my 5 children all attending public schools in GISD

Georgetown, TX

PLEASE do right by our children in Texas' public schools!! Vote to make up funding for the past years of neglect. Our kids deserve it, and the future of Texas is at stake!!

Jennifer Luftop

Texas Academic Language Therapy Association (Texas ALTA)

Austin, TX

The Texas Chapter of the Academic Language Therapy Association (Texas ALTA) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2. Texas ALTA is the professional organization for Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALTs). Our membership includes over 3,300 highly trained professionals in Texas who have completed rigorous, evidence-based multisensory structured language coursework and supervised practicum to earn a nationally recognized certification. As an organization, we uphold a professional code of ethics, require annual continuing education, and serve as a resource for communities by promoting quality practices in dyslexia intervention and literacy instruction.

We support aspects of HB 2 that allocate funding to help districts secure dyslexia and reading experts as part of their instructional and support staff. Specifically, we support the following provisions:

Shift to Intensity-Based SPED Model + Appropriate Weights: Texas ALTA strongly supports the shift from a setting-based model to an intensity-based model of funding for special education. We urge both policy makers and agency personnel to consider a number of relevant factors when assigning weights and funding to students, including the expertise of the personnel serving students. Providing weighted funding for students receiving direct, specially designed instruction from a CALT or LDT ensures that students receive evidence-based, structured literacy instruction from highly trained professionals. Research and practice consistently show that students make greater reading gains when taught by a CALT or LDT rather than through computerized programs or instruction from untrained personnel. We encourage HB 2 to include mechanisms that promote the use of these specialists.

Adjusted Implementation Timeline: We recommend shifting the implementation of the proposed SPED funding model timeline to the 2026-2027 school year, with additional funding during the 2025-2026 school year to support a gradual and strategic transition. Without sufficient time and resources, districts may struggle to implement necessary changes effectively, potentially leading to decisions that do not serve students' best interests.

Reinstatement of the Texas Dyslexia Grant: Reinstating the Texas Dyslexia Grant would enable districts to seek funding to train existing personnel to become Certified Academic Language Therapists. Additionally, these funds could support the professional development of key staff—including Educational Diagnosticians, Special Education Case Managers, School Psychologists, and district-level administrators overseeing Special Education, Dyslexia, MTSS, Evaluation, and Accountability—to ensure high-quality implementation and support at all levels.

Texas has the opportunity to strengthen literacy outcomes for all students by investing in high-quality dyslexia instruction and ensuring appropriate funding for personnel training.

James Jirsa

Self

Austin, TX

Our state is far behind the rest of the US in public education. Do not add private school support to compete with public schools that are already woefully underfunded. Private schools are not obligated to support early education, education of handicapped students, or students with learning problems. They will continue to "fall through the cracks" if you believe such students are not important enough to deserve state support.

Wendy Moore, Mayor

City of Port Aransas

Port Aransas, TX

My name is Wendy Moore and I live in Port Aransas, and I am a property owner, taxpayer, small business owner parent of a student of Port Aransas ISD and the Mayor of Port Aransas. I wish to express my support for the Additional State Aid for Regional Insurance Cost Differentials included in House Bill 2. Port Aransas is located in one of the 14 tier one coastal counties and pays huge insurance premiums, particularly for windstorm insurance. Our property insurance premiums have increased 317% since 2019. Our cost for windstorm insurance alone is more than \$1500 per student. This cost prohibits us from being able to increase pay for our teachers and other essential staff members. Thank you for including this allotment in House Bill 2 to assist with these substantial additional insurance costs that the school districts in the 14 coastal counties must pay each year.

Blair Dowdy
Self (Marketing)
San Antonio, TX

My name is Blair Dowdy and I am a parent/community member in Northeast ISD in San Antonio. I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from NEISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

- **Special Education:** The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.
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5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation.

Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow, for both our children and our country's future.

Jaymie Bryson

Self

Murphy, TX

Vouchers are an irresponsible use of tax payer money. When evaluating similar legislation in other states, the majority of voucher recipients were already paying their own tuition. The limits in place are not enough to make sure this is giving a new school choice to Texas families. Since private schools are not required to accept everyone, and vouchers are only given to those accepted into private schools, this will create a large tax increase to pay for something that many people would pay themselves. The private schools do not have enough accountability to receive a comparable amount to public schools. There is no attendance requirement. No score results requirement. No curriculum requirement. No teacher certification requirement. No background check of teachers requirement. No requirement to accept everyone regardless of race, or gender, or religion, or income or learning disability or physical disability. They should not get money from tax payers if they are allowed to discriminate in their admission. This bill as written would allow publicly funded schools to bring back segregation or put all poor and disadvantaged kids into under funded public schools. Public schools deserve to be fixed, not destroyed as this bill is designed to do. Look at all the other states that have done voucher programs and trashed their public schools in the process. Texas is better than this. We have the opportunity to make our public schools so much better to the point that students will return to public schools. But this only happens if we invest in public schools and not raise taxes on all to cover private school expenses for those already paying tuition. If private schools are so good, take what works for them and allow public schools to do the same. Funding private schools without the same requirements is not increasing competition. It is picking winners and losers. It is choosing to create a two tier system of education; those that CAN be accepted into private school and those that CAN'T. It will not allow for the poor or disabled to have a chance of success. It will further isolate and devastate our rural communities and it will further destroy our public schools. I'm begging our representatives to have a spine and stand up for your constituents and educators. Don't cave to the pressure from Greg Abbott's donors. Stand up for all Texans, not just the wealthy.

Andrea Robinson

self - mother - residing in Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

My name is Andrea Robinson and I am a parent of children in the Spring Branch ISD schools. We rely on our schools for strong education and opportunities to prepare our kids for their futures. I strongly disagree with the attempt by Governor Abbott to lead the legislature to inadequately fund the public schools and push higher funding towards private schools.

HB 2 proposed increase of \$220 per student does not do enough to meet the funding required for public schools to keep pace with inflation. The increase of \$220 is not enough. The fact that there is an proposed offer for private school vouchers at \$10K per student, and a public school at \$6380 per student is not just. It is not in the interest of our communities or our state to defund our public schools.

I do support the funding increase for PreK and teacher salaries. Teaching is an important and challenging profession, and we need to offer adequate pay incentives to get strong teachers for our kids. PreK options for lower income children is an important step towards a more equitable society, and increases in Special Ed funding is a necessity to provide services for our more vulnerable kids.

I find it unacceptable that school taxes have not been properly allocated to fund the schools they are intended to raise funds for. The state should not be running a budget surplus and be inadequately funding the schools that our communities depend on to educate our kids.

Peggy Hogge

Self / Spring Branch ISD Parent

Houston, TX

It is vital that the basic allotment be increased by a minimum of \$500. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. GT programs, special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students. I am writing to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

Laura Farnell
self--musician/mom
Arlington, TX

As a parent of two students in public schools, I urge wholeheartedly to oppose the vouchers outlined in HB2!!

Maggie Leysath, Dr.
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

It is imperative that public schools be fully funded. No matter what has been decided about vouchers, public schools must be fully funded, especially in rural areas where private schools are not available. Considering public schools continue to have mandates, funding reduction is not acceptable.

Sheryl Horton
self
Austin, TX

As a former public school teacher, I am alarmed that we are underfunding our very necessary public schools. It's bad enough that the legislature is interested in taking public funds for private schools, but adding only \$220/student in public school funding is abdication of our civic responsibilities! Keep our schools funded with a much higher amount per student! At least get us back to 2019 levels with an allocation of \$1350/student allotment! We need higher pay for teachers and added funding for all the needs of our students! Our future depends on it!

Alisa Huynh

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Your Name], I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Nicole Hobson

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

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Thank you for your consideration.

Nicole Hobson

Frances Ferguson

self

austin, TX

I strongly support a \$1,300 per student increase to the basic allotment for public schools. Public schools are the source of our children's future and the future of our workforce. Our public schools need to be back to the level of funding (adjusted for inflation) that was in place in 2019. Our rural and small towns depend on public schools for their children -- and as a major employer. This is our responsibility as Texans. I urge your support for a full increase of the basic allotment.

Candice Watson

Self- Educational Tutor for K-2nd grades

Austin, TX

Hello House Education Committee,

I'm an Educational Tutor in Austin ISD, and I provide reading intervention for students who are in K-2 on my campus. I am concerned that the budget cuts my district is making will eliminate my position for the 2025-2026 school year due to our growing budget deficit and my particular campus losing more Title 1 funding, which is where my salary comes from.

Our governor Gregg Abbott is a huge proponent in advocating for the importance of early childhood education, and early literacy in our state of Texas. He has consistently highlighted the need for students to achieve reading proficiency by the end of 3rd Grade. Similarly to Abbott, early literacy is an issue I feel passionately about too, (hence why I chose this job), and I also strongly believe that kids should be reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd Grade, which could result in better academic outcomes for all of our students.

In order for our Texas students to gain better reading proficiency, we must bolster foundation reading skills before the 3rd grade. The literacy rates for our most vulnerable students are at their lowest, and according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NAEP), it's consistent nationwide, and the lowest they've ever been. Over 60% of our students in Texas are economically disadvantaged (ED), so therefore their families may not have access to a high quality daycare due to low financial capital. Unfortunately, our students who are ED, are more likely to start Kindergarten at an academic disadvantage compared to their affluent counterparts. The role I play on my campus (K-2 reading intervention) helps to fill this gap for our most vulnerable students.

For two years, I have been consistently providing 45 mins of Tier 3 reading intervention for 5 days a week using high quality materials + researched-based explicit instruction, and it has led to great results in our MAP Growth data, with many making major growth by moving out of the 'red'. The combination of these variables proved to be successful for our students! ALL elementary schools across Texas can also see this amount of growth and success in their students with the proper funding.

In closing, since we want our students reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, I am asking that we raise the student allotment by at least \$1,000 to ensure schools across Texas don't have to solely rely on Title 1 funds to employ reading interventions for K-2, as it's an area of high need. By raising the basic allotment, our schools could have the funds to hire more of us, and begin moving the needle towards better literary rates. If we do not stick to Gregg Abbott's mission by investing in early childhood education, our literacy rates will continue to decline, and our most vulnerable students will not receive the quality and equitable education every Texas student deserves.

(You have consent to share my story during a committee hearing if it resonates)

God bless, thanks!

Jennifer Westbrook
self, public school educator
Nacogdoches, TX

I do not support HB 2 as it stands, I support recommendations on HB 2 for the House Public Education Committee to include:

Significantly increasing the Minimum Salary Schedule to ensure educator starting salaries are at least \$45,000. This will help shrink the pay gap between small/rural districts and large/urban districts.

Ensuring all teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and diagnosticians with at least two years of experience receive a raise.

Ensuring all educators with five or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$3,000.

Ensuring all educators with nine or more years of experience receive a raise of at least \$6,000.

These salary increases should be funded through increases to the Small/Mid-Size allotment and Basic Allotment. I do not oppose expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but doing so should not be at the expense of the raises outlined above.

As the law is currently written, 30% of any increase to the Basic Allotment must fund educator pay increases, including compensation increases for paraprofessionals. I also support raising that threshold to at least 40%.

Ana Villarreal Garza

Self

Houston, TX

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Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with the actual costs of running these programs.

This includes:

1. Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500.
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3. Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.
4. Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.
5. Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better.

Evan Jones

Self - mother of 4 - director of marketing

Austin, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Evan Jones, I am a parent of four young children and community member in Leander ISD in Austin and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Public education is the biggest thing we do to impact tomorrow.

Susan Fargason

Self - stay at home mother

HOUSTON, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Susan Fargason, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Sydney Bermack

Self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sydney Bermack, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Tonya Spell
SBISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tonya Spell, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Leslie Valentine

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Leslie Valentine. I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rosanne Joseph

Self

Kingwood, TX

Representatives Buckley and Cunningham,

I am asking for the basic allotment to be increased by \$1340 rather than \$220 to address the inflation rate. This would put us back to the 2019 level. Schools and the people who work in them are the cornerstones to our community. A strong school makes for strong communities. I raised 3 sons that went to the local public school and all of them went on to tier 1 universities. The population of that school was diverse and I believe their social and academic experience was enriched because of that. Let's build a strong foundation not break it down. I also agree there should be funding for the bilingual (not ESL) programs. So many countries' citizens are dual language speakers and our state should encourage this same standard.

Janis Reinken, J.D. (retired)

Self / Attorney

Austin, TX

I am a proud graduate of Texas public schools and I am opposed to the Bill "as written." The Bill needs to be changed to remove ALL references and cross-references (by word or number) to vouchers, ESA's, and equivalent terms. Also, remove all references or cross-references to reductions or restrictions of public school funding, whether by word, formula or numerical cross-references. The Bill should include references that will result in fully funding the public schools and public school personnel, from all available resources, whether GR, AF or other resources. A strong public school system in Texas benefits the students, their families, local businesses, and the state economy in general. As a taxpayer I do not believe it is lawful to ask taxpayers to subsidize private schooling, although the parents may choose private schools for their children. Let's strive for excellence in our public schools across the board!

Thank you,

Janis Reinken, JD

Austin 78757

Kimberly Parker

Self

Round Rock, TX

Support additional public school funding to close the gap in existing educational funding and public school budgets. This will help alleviate the pressure public schools are facing related to educational services

Margaret Wirick

Self / Teacher

Grapevine, TX

I am advocating for a larger increase to the basic allotment to the members of the House Public Education Committee. The lack of BA funding has negatively impacted the school district I attended growing up and am teaching for as follows:

- Raised the M&O tax rate
- Failed to provide teacher and staff raises this school year despite the tax increase
- Cut specialized programs from almost every elementary campus
- Eliminated block scheduling at the high school level
- Lost dozens of teacher positions

With vouchers proposed to be \$10,000 and the current Basic Allotment at \$6,120, I would argue that the Basic Allotment should be increased \$3,880 to also be at \$10K for our public school students.

Michelle Wethers

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

My name is Michelle Wethers, I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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John De Mott

self

San Antonio, TX

I strongly feel funding should be increased to the 2019 equivalent of \$1300 per student.

Michael Joseph
Self retired educator
KINGWOOD, TX

Rep. Buckley and Cunningham:

I am writing to ask that you consider raising the basic public school allotment a total of \$1,340 - that amount would bring the per student allotment to the 2019 level, after adjusting for inflation. We as Texans are proud people and we want to lead in everything we do. However, according to Education Week, Texas ranks 44th out of 50 states in funding per student. This, compounded by the fact that over 60% of our students are economically disadvantaged, it is imperative we give teachers and administrators the wherewithal to make a difference. I know test scores are not what they should be - however, it is not the fault of our educational system. Rather, it is the result of poverty, family dysfunction, and many students in Texas who struggle with the language. Cutting funds or giving vouchers will not help any of these students. Rather, it will further the great divide in this country between the haves and the have nots.

Knowing you are very busy, I appreciate your time and attention to this very important matter. And regardless of how you vote, I appreciate your willingness to serve and help the citizens of this great state.

Sincerely,
Mike Joseph

Case Fell
Self
Austin, TX

Please support public schools and vote against vouchers. American values are freedom of speech and education. With the Texas state funding situation, Texas should be leading America in educating our children and not following the states that are falling behind. Make public schools the best in the country and vote against vouchers.

Daphne Hoffacker

Texas Mom

Austin, TX

House Pub Ed Committee

March 6, 2025

Testimony from Daphne Hoffacker, Texas Mom,

Hi,

I am first and foremost a Texas mom and have been coming down to testify in front of this body since 2017. I was proud to be one of those moms who pushed to get HB 3 over the line in 2019. I endured the 2023 session and the four special sessions that followed and am still angry that the governor bullied our schools, bullied the members of this committee, and, at the end of the day, did great harm to the 5.4 million Texas children who depend on our public schools that got caught in the crosshairs of the Governor's political games.

I'm part of the shadow force of tens of thousands of moms who are in our schools every day supporting our teachers, most of whom are new, supporting our parents, who often struggle with the stress of living in a state that shrugs at poverty, has made access to healthcare a privilege, and in schools that have been underfunded since before my child entered kindergarten. I am on the inside and I've seen the degradation that this government, first, their austerity toward our schools followed by the embarrassing shenanigans over vouchers the last session.

I love that y'all are trying to make amends and I like a lot of things about this bill. Fine arts allotment! YES! Increasing sped allotments, security allotments, and sure, if you want to fund a Teacher Incentive Allotment, as long as you recognize that it goes to and always will be a small percentage of teachers. And I have not seen the runs but I don't anticipate this bill will cover the needs of our schools.

We want an increase of basic allotment of \$1340 to at least \$7500, and it needs to be indexed to inflation. I want to see us move to enrollment based funding and I want a requirement that all mandates must be fully funded.

Thank you for your effort on this issue that has become dire to our schools, teachers, students, and therefore families. We're tired of government-induced stress. We need this session and this committee to do better for all of us. .

Sincerely,

Daphne Hoffacker, Texas parent

Dawn Rasch

Self/ sbisd parent and taxpayer

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am a parent and community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating

Whitney Costello

Concerned parent of children in public school

Buda, TX

No to school vouchers. Fund our public school.

Kia Biller

Self, parent of public school student

Austin, TX

I urge Texas to immediately fund public school districts with the funding that they have withheld for multiple sessions, increasing that to pay for the best teachers and resources for our students statewide. We pay property taxes and choose where we live based on the quality of public schools. I expect those funds and any state matching to go into the public schools that I reside near and that my child attends. Support our children, our teachers, our public schools, and our communities now.

Blanca Galvez-Perez

SELF

Pflugerville, TX

Please support S.B. 260, Improve Public School Funding Advocate to increase the basic allotment, fully fund public schools, automatically adjust for cost of living changes, and base funding on enrollment versus attendance. Resolve Teacher & Staff Shortages Advocate to address teacher and staff shortages and improve retention. Increase School Safety Advocate to increase funding for school safety and allow local control to determine what additional safety measures are needed in each school district. Transform School Accountability Advocate to provide a meaningful state-wide school accountability system that more broadly reviews school and district performance, includes a family engagement component, accurately reflects a student's readiness for future success, and opposes outcomes-based funding.

Keep Public Dollars in Public Schools Advocate against diverting public dollars from public schools. All recipients of public dollars should be subject to the same state assessments, accountability, and parental rights. WE NEED HELP!!!! Also, NBCT should keep their TIA money, or we will lose the best of the best in Education!

Lauren Schneider

Spring Branch IsD

Houston, TX

My name is Lauren Schneider, I am a SLP in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

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Nathanael Chapman

Self

Round Rock, TX

Hello, I am concerned about this bill because it fails to provide adequate funding for public schools. If passed schools will shut down, teachers will be laid off, and the general variety and quality of programs available will diminish. Public education is the crown jewel of the American Republic. Though most funding is sourced locally, it is a national project to educate the masses. Education is a necessity as well as a right. If Texas, and the United States refuse to support public education, we can assure that our place as the world's most powerful nation will quickly be claimed by another country. There is no exaggeration in the previous statement, the foundation upon which all advanced societies runs requires mass literacy. Literacy empowers people, and with the right guidance enables people to achieve greater accomplishments. Our laws are written, not spoken therefore to be able to read as well as interpret the meaning of written words and implement them is paramount in our society. Education as a whole must be taken seriously, because the challenges faced by private and public enterprise has increased in complexity, scope, and effect. To best meet these issues, we need as many well educated and thoughtful people as possible. To not prioritize the education of our state is to go against the very foundations of the national constitution. These include the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Life, liberty of the individual, as well as the pursuit of happiness is protected by education. Life, because education and scientific advancement has helped us to create vaccines that protect us from diseases like measles. Liberty, because people seek to be free from oppression. To best fight oppression, bills, laws, and the faithful execution of these laws must be implemented by the government. To do any of these things requires a lot of effort, as well as knowledge. Knowledge of what the current laws are, as well as formulating ideas to carry out and implement the means to expand freedom. Lastly the pursuit of happiness. Happiness can come from many things, one of the most lasting forms of happiness is through achievement. People everywhere are driven to achieve their goals for varying reasons. To achieve ambitious goals serious thought and effort are required. To cultivate the largest number of people who can achieve ambitious and thoughtful goals is to prioritize their ability to critically think. It has always been the goal of education to not just make people memorize facts, but to give them the tools to utilize their specific forms of intelligence to maintain and improve the society in which they live. I attended publicly funded schools from Kindergarten through high school. It played a crucial role in encouraging me to go to college where I earned a bachelors degree in STEM. I now have the opportunity and privilege to get to work in more specialized fields which are necessary in our complex world. Don't be a fool fund schools.

Hillary Benoit

Self

Orange, TX

School vouchers should not be made legal in Texas because they could exacerbate educational inequality and divert crucial funding away from public schools. Public schools already face budget constraints and are tasked with serving a diverse range of students, including those with disabilities and from low-income families. Allowing vouchers would siphon resources from these schools, making it harder for them to maintain quality education for all students. Moreover, vouchers often favor private institutions that may not have the same accountability or transparency as public schools, leading to a lack of oversight and potentially widening the achievement gap between affluent and disadvantaged students. By focusing on improving public schools instead of creating a system that funds private institutions, Texas can ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Mark Simoneau

self, Software Engineering Manager

Round Rock, TX

I ask that you keep National Board Certification as a pathway to TIA at the recognized level. Anyone that can achieve National Board Certification has proven themselves as a master teacher with expertise to help support all students in their classroom. They deserve to be recognized as a master of their craft and receive financial incentives through TIA.

Lindsey Boone, Mrs.

Self/ homemaker

Friendswood, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lindsey Boone, I am a parent/community member in Friendswood ISD in Friendswood and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

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Teresa Fell

Self- Fitness

Austin, TX

Please save our public schools

Katelyn Damore

self- teacher

Austin, TX

My name is Katelyn Damore, and I am a bilingual content interventionist in Austin, Texas. I have been an educator for ten years, working with students who need targeted literacy support to build the foundational skills necessary for academic success. I am writing in support of increasing teacher compensation in HB2 but to also highlight how the bill falls short in ensuring fair pay for all educators.

Every day, I work with students who are reading below grade level, providing small-group and individualized instruction to help them succeed. One of my students, Arturo, came to me at the beginning of the year struggling to recognize basic words. By working together consistently, we made incredible progress—by mid-year, they were reading full sentences with confidence. Moments like these are why I stay in education. But the reality is that many teachers doing this critical work are not recognized in the state’s compensation structure.

Since I am an interventionist, my position does not have a state-approved evaluation system under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). Unlike teachers in tested subjects, I don’t have a straightforward way to “prove” my impact through standardized measures, even though my work directly contributes to student growth. Without a clear pathway to increased pay, interventionists, specialists, and other support staff are often overlooked and undervalued in performance-based compensation models.

HB2 makes an important step forward by increasing the basic allotment and expanding performance-based incentives like TIA. However, these policies do not go far enough. I urge the committee to strengthen HB2 by ensuring that all teachers—regardless of subject, role, or grade level—receive meaningful base salary increases.

Performance-based pay does not include all educators. Many teachers, including interventionists, bilingual specialists, special education teachers, and instructional coaches, do not have a designated state evaluation model that allows them to access TIA bonuses. Relying primarily on performance-based pay leaves many critical educators behind which can be disheartening when the same work is required without the same compensation.

Teacher retention is a growing crisis. Across Texas, low base salaries are driving experienced teachers out of the profession. Many educators take on second jobs or leave for better-paying industries, even when they love teaching. A guaranteed increase in base salaries would help keep dedicated professionals in the classrooms. Students need stability in their schools. Each time a teacher leaves, students lose consistent, high-quality instruction. Retaining teachers through competitive base pay ensures that students receive the support they need year after year.

While HB2 makes progress in funding education, it does not do enough to support all educators fairly. I respectfully ask to prioritize higher base salaries in addition to performance-based incentives to ensure every Texas teacher

Barbara Meyer

Self

Tomball, TX

I OPPOSE HB 2 and HB 3

Rebecca Gieskes

Self

Bastrop, TX

My name is Rebecca. I am a former ISD and public charter school educator plus a mom of a 5 and 9 year old. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. While public charter schools work miracles every day, they cannot do the great work they do without enough funds to have an adequate building.

This just isn't fair to our students. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. We provide high-quality options for families in our community so more children can thrive.

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Thank you for all you do for our Texas students.

Kelsey Allen-Gassen

Katy literacy, dyslexia, adhd, learning disability Coalition

Fulshear, TX

“Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause denied or delayed evaluations, an adequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention and students being dismissed from dyslexia intervention before they are reading at grade level because of the lack of funding.

Amada Rodriguez

Self/ Engineer

Sugar Land, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, and lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Tanis West

Self

Austin, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funding resulted in delayed evaluations for my son who has autism and a dysgraphia learning disability. We have also struggled with vacant special education teacher positions because our school district has had difficulty hiring and retaining certified special education teachers. If you properly fund special education, our district could offer more competitive salaries. They could also offer more stipends to hire and retain qualified special education teachers who are so critical to my child's success in school.

Ana Gann

Lake Ridge HS PTSA

Grand Prairie, TX

In my children's school district they are already under staffed and lack resources for dyslexia students to learn. Special education and school safety funds are needed. They need funds for teachers and students! NO VOUCHERS!!!!

Susan Mouser
Retired teacher
Abilene, TX

Properly Fund Oublic Schools. It's your Constitutional responsibility!

Cindy Bruce
Northwest ISD
Argyle, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause inadequate staffing to provide the most appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Texas has the funds available, and should be fully funding all aspects of public schools.

Maria Manzano, Ms.
Self- educator
Fort Worth, TX

Please close the gap for school funding

Melissa Vazquez
Dyslexia Therapists, Students, Educational Diagnosticians
Red Oak, TX, TX

Please raise the funding for Special Education in public school sectors. With the HB 3928, there has been an influx of students being serviced without an increase of funding, which means that not all services are being equipped properly. Dyslexia Therapists and Diagnosticians are working several hours off the clock in order to meet students need and to provide the students with the services that they are entitled to. Services for students with dyslexia are drastically under funded.

Katherine Dombrowski
Self / Chemical Engineer
Austin, TX

Per pupil funding needs to be raised by at least \$1000, and ideally by substantially more (I'd suggest \$3,000 per student) so that our public schools can have resources that compete with other states in the nations. Texas students need to be well educated so that they can drive the economic engine of Texas. Texas schools need to be well funded so that we have strong economically vibrant communities. Texas teachers need to be well funded so that we can attract the best talent and reward them for one of the most challenging jobs in our economy.

Alyssa Freeney
Futuro San Antonio
Converse, TX

My name is Alyssa Freeney and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Melissa Franklin
Futuro San Antonio
Converse, TX

My name is Melissa Franklin and I'm commenting on behalf of Futuro San Antonio. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

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Paul & Carole Haupt
YISD Retired
79935, El Paso, TX, TX

Defeat public dollars for education from going to private schools.

Bryan Armes

Self

Lubbock, TX

I am a Texan, and I strongly urge you to oppose any efforts to divert public funds to private school voucher programs. Our neighborhood public schools are the backbone of our communities, and they need to be fully and adequately funded to ensure every child receives a quality education.

Instead of funneling taxpayer dollars into private institutions with little accountability, we should invest in our public schools—raising teacher pay, reducing class sizes, and ensuring that all students, regardless of background or zip code, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

I ask you to stand with Texas families and prioritize public education by voting against any voucher schemes and supporting increased funding for our public schools.

Thank you for your time and service.

Marissa Stewart

self

Hutto, TX

I am demanding the committee increase teacher pay across the board. The Texas Incentive Allotment does not give raises to all teachers and Texas currently ranks 30th in average teacher pay. Texas is also experiencing an inability to employ enough qualified teachers to fill open positions. To be competitive, and get the best for our students and communities, the Legislature should include pay raises ALL teachers benefit from, not just ones based on test scores that are only eligible for teachers in tested subjects. Please give teachers the pay they deserve for the hard work they do!

Kayla Hewitt

Self - writer

Abilene, TX

I would request that this bill be amended to increase the the basic allotment per student to at least \$7,000. Our investment in education needs to keep pace with rising costs so that our children can continue to receive the education that will set them up for success in the future.

Chad Smith

Monahans-Wickett-Pyote ISD

Monahans, TX

Why can no one tell districts that send recapture funds (A ton of West Texas Districts) to the state where the dollars are going? We used to know what schools would benefit from "robinhood!" This is not right! I wish D.O.G.E. would dive into recapture and how those funds are being used!

Brittany Gurganus

Self

Abilene, TX

Administrators and other support staff are vital to the function of the school. They need raises as well!

Arnetta Murray
City of Iowa Colony
Iowa Colony, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to school vouchers and House Bill 2 (HB2). Public education is the foundation of our communities, and taxpayer money should be used to strengthen it rather than diverting funds to private schools that are not accountable to the public.

If private schools need additional funding, then those who can afford them should be responsible for creating a private fund to support families who choose that route. The burden should not fall on taxpayers, particularly when public schools are struggling with underfunding, teacher shortages, and outdated resources. Texas should be investing in our public education system to ensure every child receives a quality education, regardless of their zip code or socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, I urge Governor Abbott to stop holding our tax dollars hostage and instead allocate them to the public schools that serve the majority of Texas students. Our teachers deserve better pay, our schools deserve proper funding, and our children deserve equitable educational opportunities. HB2 does not address these pressing needs; instead, it undermines the work of educators and the strength of our public education system.

I ask you to stand with Texas teachers, parents, and students by opposing HB2 and supporting policies that fund and uplift public schools rather than dismantling them.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and hope you will advocate for the future of public education in Texas.

Kasye Palmer
Self
Richardson, TX

The daily student allotment has not been raised since 2019. That is a dereliction of duties. Greg Abbott is withholding funds that were approved in the last session and students are paying the price. Districts are closing schools, firing teachers, and raising class sizes. This bill does not go far enough in raising the daily student allotment. It needs to be raised by \$3000. That way schools can cover inflation costs, recover their losses from the past few years, and properly pay teachers and support staff. Reject this bill and significantly raise the daily student allotment.

Abigail Payne
Self/executive director
Abilene, TX

1. Private schools tuition prices will go up.
 2. Funding for public schools will go down.
 3. Inevitably there will be state mandates testing for homeschool students.
- There is no identifiable benefit from vouchers, except for the ultra rich that will not care when private school prices increase.

Cameron Wiley, School Board Trustee
Self/Abilene Wylie ISD School Board Place 7
Tuscola, TX

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding House Bill 2 and House Bill 3 as currently written. While I appreciate the effort to address public school funding and teacher compensation, these bills fail to provide the level of support that Texas schools, educators, and students truly need. HB 2 proposes an increase of only \$220 per student, raising the basic allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,380. This amount is simply inadequate. Schools across Texas have been forced to pass deficit budgets in recent years, and to keep up with inflation, districts need at least \$1,000 more per student. The proposed increase does not restore funding to sustainable levels and leaves schools struggling to maintain quality education. The bill also requires that 40% of any increase be allocated toward teacher raises, which is an improvement over the current 30% requirement. However, the increase itself is so small that it will result in minimal raises for teachers. Additionally, this bill does not address other critical school personnel, such as administrators and support staff, who are equally essential to school operations and student success. Without addressing these positions, schools will continue to struggle to retain experienced employees. Another concern is the restriction on uncertified teachers in core subjects. While ensuring qualified educators in every classroom is important, this change does not address the root of the issue, teacher shortages. In 2023, nearly 40% of new hires were uncertified, and many districts rely on these educators due to hiring challenges. This system does not fully capture teacher effectiveness and continues the overemphasis on standardized testing instead of using a more holistic evaluation approach. I do appreciate the proposed shift in special education funding to a needs-based model, which is an improvement from the current system. However, the bill does not go far enough in providing the resources necessary for schools to fully support students with disabilities. Without a meaningful increase in funding, the transition to this new model may not achieve its intended impact. Public schools already lack adequate financial support, and introducing a program that pulls from the same funding pool could negatively impact students who rely on public education. I strongly urge the committee to revise these bills to provide a meaningful increase in the basic allotment, ensure real teacher raises that also extend to other school staff, address teacher shortages with long-term solutions rather than restrictive policies. Our public schools, educators, and students deserve better. I appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns and respectfully request that these bills be amended to meet the real needs of Texas public education.

Molly McNeill, Mrs.
Self
Abilene, TX

Please stop these ridiculous bills!!!!!! Public funds should go toward public schools ONLY- we the people see past these bills and KNOW that Abbott has already pocketed personally to push them through. Please don't follow suit!!!!

Adrienne Gray
self, home maker
Austin, TX

I am a parent of now adult students who were mostly public school students, but we also home schooled for a while and one child attended a private high school. School options can be challenging and different for each child's needs so I understand the support that is out there for a voucher program. HOWEVER, the state of funding and support for our public schools is AWFUL. We are consistently rated in the lowest quartile and Texas government has repeatedly lowered the amount given per student, period. No excuses for not adequately funding public education where the vast majority of students are educated in this state. Public schools are the heart of their communities, bringing together students and their families for the sacred duty of educating our children. If you want to also support private options, great, but NOT at the expense of public schools and NOT with more money than you give public schools per student. Keep Texas educated and growing by supporting and investing in ALL students.

Sarah Pittman, Mrs.

Self

Abilene, TX

Vouchers aren't the answer to well funded education for all students. This will only maybe meet the desires (not needs) of some. There are millions of students in Texas. Fund the schools. While I understand school choice is a good option for some, public education money needs to stay in public schools. There already is a bit of choice. You choose where you live. Parents apply for transfers to different schools. Doing what is right for all students is the right thing. Withholding funds for vouchers to work is a slap in the face to the teachers of Texas who work hard for EVERY student in my classroom. I use my own funds for resources needed for deeper understanding. Texas is losing valuable, well educated veteran teachers because their time, hard work, and work ethic isn't rewarded or valued. And those veterans are being replaced by new teachers who are getting alternative certifications. If you want to retain highly trained master teachers, then you have to support them. The children are the future. Do better for them. Vouchers are not the answer.

Andrew Messer-Hinton, Dr

self

Dallas, TX

The Texas public education system is facing a critical juncture. We must recognize teachers as the highly skilled professionals they are and acknowledge the pivotal role they hold in shaping the future of our state. According to data from the National Education Association, Texas teachers earn approximately \$9,000 less than the national average salary for educators (National Education Association, 2022). This significant disparity in compensation threatens to undermine both the stability and the overall quality of our public school system.

The Texas Constitution mandates that the state legislature "make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools" (Tex. Const. art. VII, § 1). However, the current status of teacher remuneration in Texas suggests that this constitutional obligation is not being sufficiently met. Consequently, it is vital that the legislature undertakes decisive action to address the crisis in teacher compensation and to secure the long-term integrity of our public schools.

To remediate this crisis and fulfill its constitutional duty, the Texas legislature should consider implementing the following measures:

- **Significant Across-the-Board Salary Increase:** Provide a comprehensive salary uplift for all certified educators. Aligning teacher salaries with the national average will bolster the competitiveness of the profession and enhance its attractiveness to aspiring educators.
- **Automatic Cost-of-Living Adjustment:** Integrate an automatic cost-of-living adjustment into the Education Code. This measure will ensure that teacher salaries consistently keep pace with inflation and the rising cost of living, preserving the real value of their earnings.
- **Retention Bonus System:** Establish a robust retention bonus system offering immediate financial incentives for educators who remain in their classrooms. Such a system is crucial for curtailing teacher attrition and retaining experienced professionals who are essential for maintaining the quality of education.

By implementing these reforms, the Texas legislature can make significant strides toward stabilizing and improving the public education system. Investment in teacher compensation and retention is not only critical for enhancing the job satisfaction and professional stature of educators but also for ensuring better educational outcomes and prospects for Texas students.

Sarah Gray

Self

Austin, TX

I would first like the record to state that I am **VEHEMENTLY** against vouchers in any form. I am asking my Texas representatives to **FULLY FUND** public schools. Additionally, for this bill, the proposed \$220 basic allotment increase per student is far too low. To keep up with inflation and ensure quality education, schools need at least a \$1,340 increase per student. Let's increase that allotment and give our students and teachers what they deserve! I urge you to significantly increase the per-student funding allotment, provide guaranteed raises for all public school employees, and boost funding for special education and school infrastructure.

Colby Butcher

Self

Bushland, TX

I am a trustee for Bushland ISD. Our small community was barely keeping up with all the financial burdens of running a school district. Now we are operating in the RED because of tax compressions. To ever move back to our financial goals we have to pass a VATRE which is still a tax increase to the property owners. Our tax payers money should not be used to finance Private Businesses. Local schools are what define each community and the vote record shows it is the intent of State Officials to break this system for what ever reason but they will only be hurting their voters. The system is not perfect but the bills up for vote WILL NOT help schools but only destroy them.

Cynthia Hauck, Mrs.

Retired teacher

Amarillo, TX

As a retired Texas teacher who started teaching in 1976 and retired in 2011, I am strongly opposed to the implementation of public school vouchers. This would cripple our educational system. There is absolutely no validity, accountability, or necessity to implement this. Should this be instituted, there are no guarantees that certified people would be educating our children. I cannot fathom why this would even be a possibility. Where in the world do they think our children with disabilities would be adequately serviced? Yhis is a massive population in every district whose families desperately need this daily, consistent help. Other considerations which would be severely handicapped would be those of school nutrition for those children who are currently without, free transportation, counseling services, special services (i.e.)diagnostic testing to determine eligibility for special services, contractual services for severe situations, after school care, as well as physical education and the fine arts programs in Texas. Why do the private vouchers require \$10,000 per child where as public education would receive only \$6,500 which is obviously well below the already existing inflation rates? This brings us to the topic of curriculum which daily addresses the established essential elements per grade level for Texas. Couples with an effective curriculum is the necessity for a measurable, valid, and reliable instrument for recording accurate, measurable growth for students per the calendar year. In my opinion, this is looming disaster in the uncertain horizon of public education in Texas. Certainly, the system could always use improvements, but you cannot shackle our future generations with such disastrous, sweeping poor decisions simply because one governor and his leadership determined this was an effective decision. Texas educators both past and present should be sincerely heard since they are the very heart and would of these considerations. They are in the trenches fighting for our children. We should stand together with our vision firmly focused on the future..our children - not the dollar bill.

McKenzie Evans

Self

Austin, TX

I support my local schools, do not want school vouchers!

Emily Belcher

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Emily Belcher. I am a parent and educator in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$1,500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Nicholas Joseph

self, Engineer

Austin, TX

Writing on HB 2 - I am encouraging the committee to raise the basic allotment by \$1340 in order to return to 2019 funding levels. An increase of \$220, as in this bill, is not nearly enough, given the inflation that has occurred since then. Schools all across Texas are facing record deficits, and the reason is because this legislature has not raised the basic allotment since 2019. Please do the right thing for our kids and schools and give them the funding they deserve. Also, too much of this bill funding is tied up in special programs that must be administered. Give local schools the control to direct funding where its needed. Thank you.

Kim Martinez, Mrs

Self teacher

Arlington, TX

I am a teacher in Arlington ISD. We have seen the damage to public Ed that school vouchers have done in EVERY other state that has implemented them. Study after study shows that 75-90% of the tuition assistance monies are only going to wealthier students that were ALREADY attending public school. It doesn't help middle and lower class AT ALL. It just takes funds away from public schools that are already underfunded. Teachers and school staff definitely need and deserve a higher wage, but we don't want it at the expense of overall education. NO. VOUCHERS

Cynthia Lewis

Self

Lufkin, TX

My name is Cynthia Lewis. I live in Lufkin, Texas. I am concerned about HB2 as it relates to Texas Public Schools. The proposed allotment of \$6,380 per pupil in public schools is insufficient compared to \$10,000 per pupil for private. school vouchers. I feel strongly that a significant increase is necessary to meet the needs of all pupils in public schools.

Kaye Martin

Self

Weatherford, TX

Please make Texas Public Schools the best schools in the nation. Fund our public schools and forget about the vouchers.!

Courtney McElhaney Peebles

Self

New Braunfels, TX

Public funds should not be directed to private schools through a voucher program. Please increase the per student allocation for public schools and do not move forward the "school choice" voucher program. Vouchers will negatively impact public education in Texas.

Carlton Willmann

self, parent

Austin, TX

My school district is currently facing a multi million dollar deficit - we're facing serious cuts next year to our district that many overburdened districts have already had to make - including eliminating art, music, and our librarians from our schools. Our superintendent has said it would be impossible to keep the quality of education based on the cuts that will need to be made. My kids are just starting out in elementary school - its incredibly worrying to think that they're facing a declining quality education in their future. So I ask that you amend the following in HB2: increase the basic allotment to at least \$1240; index the allotment to inflation; move attendance based funding to enrollment funding, fully fund all existing mandates, and reform the recapture system.

Juan Jose Reyes

self

Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Juan Jose Reyes, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students. The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend -- our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

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- **Pre-Kindergarten:** This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Barton Hejny
Self - Attorney
Austin, TX

I was born and raised in and around Austin and I am proudly a product of Texas's traditional public school districts.

My wife is an English teacher in Austin ISD. She wanted to testify today but cannot afford to take an entire day off.

My children are in a traditional public school district and always will be.

Respectfully, I am adding my voice to the chorus of Texans who want and need our traditional public school districts to receive adequate funding from state sources.

HB2 does some things right, but it needs much more. In particular, the basic allotment **MUST** be raised substantially — phased in if necessary — indexed to inflation, and calculated based on enrollment rather than daily attendance to enable our schools to thrive instead of continually starving for funding.

The problems in our public schools can almost all be traced to our state's elected officials' refusal to provide adequate funding. Texas public school district employees should not be massively underpaid. Districts should not be forced to slash budgets to make ends meet year after year. Students and teachers should not have to sit in classrooms with no heat or air conditioning.

Yet, every other year we meet here and seem to make the same choices. We choose to talk about teacher pay raises that never seem to materialize, or fail to match cost of living increases.

We choose to offer small incentives to a tiny percentage of teachers based on high-stakes testing.

We choose to divert public funds to private entities with no accountability.

And we choose to ignore the fact that our public school system, one of the central pillars of our communities, is crumbling before our eyes.

LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENT CHOICE THIS TIME. It's not an impossible task. It's not too late. I realize there are a tremendous number of variables and fiscal considerations to take into account. Nevertheless, this bill can be improved.

Phase in a substantially higher basic allotment, index it to inflation, and change the calculation to enrollment instead of daily attendance.

Texans across the state need this change. Please make the right choice this time. Thank you.

Nancy Hagan
Self; retired
Fort Worth, TX

Please oppose HB2, as it severely undermines the quality of public school education in Texas.

Amy Servat
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Servat, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical education programs that serve our students.

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Transportation: The 2023-24 state allocation was \$1.5 million, while the cost of maintaining transportation services was \$10.4 million, leading to an \$8.9 million shortfall. In 2024-25, the gap is expected to be \$8.3 million, making it difficult to ensure students have reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Pre-Kindergarten: This critical early childhood education program faced a \$3.7 million funding gap in 2023-24, with an estimated \$3.2 million shortfall in 2024-25. Underfunding pre-K limits access to high-quality early learning opportunities that set children up for future success.

Our educators and administrators are doing their best with limited resources, but without legislative action, these funding shortfalls will continue to compromise the quality of education and essential services for Texas students. We need a bill that ensures state funding keeps pace with actual costs of running these programs. These includes:

Increasing the Basic Allotment at a minimum of \$500

Fully funding special education services to meet the true cost of providing federally required support for students with disabilities.

Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

Amy Servat
Teacher, Concerned Parent, and Disgruntled Community Member

Stephanie Booth
Spring Branch ISD community
Houston, TX

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Booth, I am a parent/community member in Spring Branch ISD in Houston and I am providing my written testimony to urge you to support legislation that will close the funding gaps in critical educational programs that serve our students.

The data from SBISD's state funding allocations highlight a troubling trend—our schools are significantly underfunded in key areas, forcing them to absorb millions in unfunded costs. Special education, safety and security, transportation, and pre-kindergarten programs are all experiencing funding shortfalls that put immense strain on school districts and, ultimately, harm our students.

For example:

Special Education: The state allotment for special education in 2023-24 was \$31.5 million, but actual expenditures reached \$53.5 million, leaving a \$22 million shortfall. This gap is projected to be \$20.3 million in 2024-25. Without adequate funding, students with disabilities may not receive the legally mandated services they need to thrive.

Safety & Security: In 2023-24, the state provided only \$0.9 million, but the actual cost was \$8.9 million, creating an \$8 million deficit. For 2024-25, the gap is projected to grow to \$10 million, putting school safety measures at risk.

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Increasing state funding for school safety and security to protect students and staff.

Expanding transportation funding to ensure students have safe and reliable access to school.

Boosting investment in early childhood education to support pre-kindergarten programs that lay the foundation for academic success.

I urge you to prioritize our students by closing these funding gaps. Texas schools cannot afford to keep operating with such large deficits, and our children deserve better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Thompson

Self

Austin, TX

I am writing as a concerned grandmother of school aged kids in public school. Our kids are the future of Texas. It's the teachers who educate them, stimulate their curiosity and motivate them to excel. The basic allotment has not been increased since 2019. It's time to correct this huge gap and invest in our future.

Texas has a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. Please raise the basic allotment by \$1300. Take a stand on behalf of all the teachers, as well as aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage. It's the minimum we should do for our children and our future. Thank you.

Richard Bates

Universtiy United Methodist Church, AUstin

Austin, TX

Public education is vital in Texas but especially in small Texas towns where there is no choice.

Heather Richter

Self

Thrall, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, Thrall ISD, insufficient special education funds cause, inadequate staffing and lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Amanda Ellis

Self

Midland, TX

I am opposed to vouchers and any education savings accounts. I would like to see a significant increase in per pupil funding well above the proposed \$220. An increase of \$1,340 per pupil will help offset the fact that no increase has been made since 2019. It is time for the Texas legislature to stand up for CHILDREN. Thank you.

Kathryn douglas

Self

MANVEL, TX

We need nearly \$1300 per student. Support our student, they are the future. They are what will be American- when they say which country has less crime, success, education, reading level, safety, new ideas- it will be be wise our children are supported completely in schools with money NOW.

Cara Miller

Pineywoods Community Academy

Lufkin, TX

I have seen these students make tremendous gains through the years. Not funding them completely is a disservice to the future of Texas. Providing the funds for these students to become educated, productive members of society would mean so much for the future of this state.

Gregory Thomas

N/A

Terrell Hills, TX

Please raise the individual allotment to \$1,340, 2019 levels. Public education is essential to the economy of Texas and the well being of our fellow citizens. Thank you.

Les Dragon

Three Rivers ISD

Three Rivers, TX

I thank the House of Representatives for bringing this important issue up. Whereas the \$220 is a starting point, it does not do enough to help our school district. An incremental raise costs our school district about \$200,000. The increase that is currently proposed will bring in an extra \$114,180, and 40% of that must go towards raises as written. To get us where we need to be, we actually require an increase of about \$600-800 in the Basic Allotment. Our district will most likely have to pass a deficit budget for the third consecutive year and dip into its fund balance. I do observe some other allotments in the bill for Special Education and other areas, and those will offset some of the costs that the District has had to endure due to rising costs and inflation.

MARISA E Plumb

Self

Austin, TX

Please consider raising the student allotment by a greater amount —something like \$1000 will get us back to 2019 levels. Our school is under resourced causing many professional families of industry and community leaders to think about leaving Texas. Bright students are not reaching their full potential.

Grace Rohne

Teachers

Lago Vista, TX

This is not nearly enough money going into public education. This is not going to prevent schools from closing or schools losing quality educators. This is simply not enough. As an educator, we are already underfunded and now you want to take more money from us and then try and fix it with SB2? This is maybe 1/5 of what we need in order to fully serve our future generations in the classroom. Please reconsider the amount of money that is going into our public education system. It needs to be tripled at least. We are already spread so thin.

David Perkins

myself

Abilene, TX

Parents of students with special needs who are referred to a private residential treatment center should be informed about the resources provided by the state supported living centers (SSLCs). My daughter has benefited from living at the Abilene SSLC for almost 20 years, but we almost missed that opportunity because the local LIDDA did not tell us about the SSLC campus even though it is only 10 minutes from where we live. We were desperately looking for appropriate resources for our daughter. We looked at group homes but a neighborhood setting is not safe or adequate for her. A friend told us about the SSLC campus...the LIDDA did not. Please help other families be informed about the resources available at the SSLC campuses. Simply offering a tour of the SSLC can be extremely informative and comforting.

Jill Black, Mrs.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please vote to raise the basic allotment to \$1340 instead of the suggested \$220. We need to fully fund our education system to enable a strong work force for our state.

Gregory Ibanez, Mr

self, architect

Fort Worth, TX

Public education is the "seed corn" of our Texas future. In a time of billions of dollars of surplus, I urge that education funding be increased to cover the growth and inflation of the past decade. Cutting administration dollars- yes. But don't impact the students. Thank you.

Regina Ellis

My child

New Boston, TX

Please increase funding for special education in our schools.

Amanda Bossert

Self

Katy, TX

The House Public Education Committee is discussing HB 2, a school funding bill that raises base state funding by just \$220 per student. We need an increase of \$1,340 per student to match inflation. please increase funding to public schools.

Carrie Williams

Self, accountant

Belton, TX

I am opposed to this bill because it prioritizes spending too heavily for private schools. Our public schools is where funding is needed most, and we shouldn't be spending twice as much on private schools

Debra Stark, Dr.

None. I am a private citizen and resident of Texas and I am representing myself.

MCALLEN, TX

I am writing to voice my opposition to HB 2 which relates to public education and public school finance. I do not believe that our tax dollars should be spent to subsidize private education. It is the responsibility of the state to assist local cities and communities in supporting and funding public education which is a fundamental right not only in this state but in this country. I am very discourage by the numerous attempts to redirect public education funds to private education. The state needs to invest in our public schools as opposed to privatizing educational alternatives. If individuals choose to send their children to private schools that should be on their own dime. Not mine.

Jessica Jenkins

Self- Educator

Palestine, TX

I am writing to advocate for additional compensation for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in Texas. As a third-grade math teacher and a National Board Certified educator, I take great pride in continuously enhancing my professional practice to provide the highest quality education for my students. However, despite the rigorous certification process and demonstrated excellence in teaching, Texas does not provide a separate stipend for NBCTs, unlike many other states that recognize the value of this credential through additional pay incentives.

Currently, Texas offers the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) to reward highly effective teachers, but NBCTs who qualify for the exemplary level in TIA do not receive any additional compensation for their national certification. This structure inadvertently diminishes the significance of National Board Certification, as it does not acknowledge the immense effort, dedication, and financial commitment required to achieve and maintain this credential. There should be a distinct tier of compensation for NBCTs that is independent of the TIA program, ensuring that teachers who have earned this prestigious certification are recognized and fairly compensated for their expertise.

Several other states understand the importance of National Board Certification and provide direct stipends to certified teachers. For example:

North Carolina offers an annual 12% salary supplement to teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

Mississippi provides a \$6,000 annual stipend to NBCTs.

South Carolina grants an annual bonus of \$5,000 for certified teachers.

Washington allocates an annual stipend of approximately \$5,505, with additional incentives for those working in high-needs schools.

Louisiana offers a \$5,000 stipend to NBCTs.

By implementing a similar model, Texas can reinforce its commitment to educational excellence by incentivizing teachers to pursue and maintain National Board Certification. This investment not only rewards teacher expertise but also benefits students by ensuring they receive instruction from highly qualified professionals. Research consistently shows that National Board Certified Teachers positively impact student learning outcomes, making this an investment in the future of Texas education.

I urge you to support legislation that provides a separate stipend for National Board Certified Teachers in Texas, distinct from the Teacher Incentive Allotment. Doing so will encourage more teachers to pursue this prestigious certification, elevate the teaching profession, and ultimately enhance student achievement across our state.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving education in Texas. I want to stay in the classroom, but compensation is key!

Sincerely,

Jessica Jenkins, TX NBCT

Amanda Bossert

Self

Katy, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap and work to adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, ending the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education.

Ashly Ballesteros

Coppell ISD

Coppell, TX

1. Thank you for considering an increase to the basic allotment. We hope you will consider a larger increase or decrease the percentage required for staff salary increase from 40% that is proposed. The current 40% allocates \$88 of the \$220 per student increase which give ISDs very little ability to address local needs.

MATH FOR THIS BULLET: $\$220/\text{student} * 13,000 \text{ approximate CISD enrollment} = \2.86M total

40% to teacher pay: $\$88/\text{student} * 13,000 \text{ approximate CISD enrollment} = \1.144M

60% discretionary: $\$132/\text{student} * 13,000 \text{ approximate CISD enrollment} = \1.716M

REFERENCE: a 3% pay raise for CISD faculty and staff costs approximately \$2M-\$3M per year

2. I understand the initial evaluation allotment is believed to be for special education. Any additional funding related to special education is helpful, including funds for evaluations. The \$615M increase in special education is also helpful as much of the special education requirements are currently unfunded in our ISD. Please note that having the maximum amount capped annually may not provide the annual impact at the district level that is well-intended by the bill.

3. We appreciate a fine arts allotment being included in this bill. Fine arts of all types are a huge part of a robust student experience in Coppell ISD. Any additional money to help fund programs we currently offer is wonderful.

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE CALLING/EMAILING: Much like the Gifted & Talented allotment which is capped, while it will provide many dollars, it will also require tracking on how the funds were spent. (For example, the GT allotment is worth about \$270,000 for CISD because of the

Heidi Gerbracht

self. program management

Austin, TX

Fund our schools! No vouchers!

April Cope, Mom

Household

DALLAS, TX

No to vouchers. Fully fund public schools and special education.

Emily Foote

Self - TX Nationally Board Certified Teacher and Exemplary TIA Recipient

Palestine, TX

I am writing to advocate for a dedicated fourth tier within the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) that specifically recognizes National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and stacks with existing TIA levels. Currently, Texas includes National Board Certification as a pathway within TIA, but this structure prevents NBCTs from receiving additional compensation for their achievement.

As a third-grade reading teacher in Palestine ISD, I qualify for the Exemplary level of TIA, in part due to my National Board Certification. However, I receive no additional pay for earning this national distinction. National Board Certification represents a rigorous, research-based process that strengthens teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, and it should be recognized accordingly.

Many states already offer separate financial incentives for NBCTs, including:

- Maryland – \$10,000 salary increase for all NBCTs, plus an additional \$7,000 for those in low-performing schools.
- Michigan – Up to \$10,000 for NBCTs serving in high-need schools.
- Mississippi – \$6,000 annual salary increase for the duration of certification.
- Arkansas – Up to \$10,000 annually for NBCTs, particularly in high-poverty schools.

To retain and attract highly effective educators in Texas, I urge the legislature to establish a fourth tier within TIA that would *stack* with the existing Recognized, Exemplary, and Master designations. This approach would ensure that National Board Certification is properly valued as a distinct professional achievement, while also allowing NBCTs to earn additional compensation for their impact in the classroom.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I want to stay in the classroom! Compensation is key!

Sincerely,

Emily Foote, M. Ed., TX NBCT

Chelsie Wilson

Self

Spring, TX

Do not defund our schools. Against all school voucher programs. Keep funds in public education. Please confirm you recorded this.

Daniel Huff

self; parent

Austin, TX

It looks like the current version of HB2 will increase the basic allotment (BA) to \$6,380 from \$6,160 per student (\$3.2 billion). This 3.57% increase is not enough; the increase needs to at least account for inflation since the last adjustment. Cumulative inflation from 2019 to 2025 is somewhere in the range of 18-25%. To account for that, the target should be more like \$7,400 per student just to get back towards the real-value-equivalent of 2019 funding levels. (Our spending per student in 2019 was in the bottom 20% of all US States.)

Esmeralda Perez-Gonzalez, Dr.

Austin ISD

Kyle, TX

Dear Representative, Zwiener,

I am currently a retired NBCT who currently supports fellow educators seeking their National Board Certification. They are seeking their NBCT because they do not qualify for TIA by way of TTESS, district data, and/ or their district does not participate in TIA. By becoming an NBCT they have a pathway to TIA. Please keep NBCT's at the recognized designation in TIA pathway, we are growing our NBCT's in Texas, start to recognize us just like other states have done for years. Becoming an NBCT is not an easy task, yet we do it because we want to improve our craft. I love this work, please keep NBCTs alive with a TIA pathway.

Sincerely,

Dr. Esmeralda Pérez-González, NBCT

Andrew Freeman

BASIS Texas Charter Schools, Inc.

San Antonio, TX

My name is Andrew Freeman and I'm the Executive Director of BASIS Texas Charter Schools, Inc. (BTCSI). I'm writing in support of HB 2, particularly its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

BTCSI serves almost 7,000 students from San Antonio to north Texas. When we open our doors to students and families at our two new campuses this fall, we will serve approximately 9,000 students state wide. By the fall of 2025, we will have tripled our state-wide enrollment during the last six years, all while remaining an A-rated public charter school district.

While we're understandably proud of our growth and our students' achievements, inflation and construction costs have risen steeply, and it's becoming more challenging by the day to open campuses to meet the overwhelming demand from families throughout Texas. In the last four years, we've seen an over-60-percent increase in the cost of constructing a school facility.

Our two campus numbers housed in our BASIS Cedar Park campus have a combined waitlist of over 3,500 children. Our Plano campus will open on day one with an enrollment of over 1,300 students. District wide, we have almost as many children on a BASIS waitlist as we have students currently enrolled.

We respectfully request your support in helping our students and families to access the high-quality, free, public-charter school programming they are so overwhelmingly seeking.

Respectfully,

Andrew Freeman

Kimberly Tucker

Self, Senior Analyst

Austin, TX

Just to break even with 2019 funding levels, classrooms need an increase of \$1,340 per student. House Bill 2 offers just \$220. We need much more funding for public schools - our kids deserve better.

Amber Whittle, Mrs.

0.00

Port Lavaca, TX

I am a 1st grade teacher in Calhoun County. I am a National Board Certified Teacher. I received the designation in Dec. 2024 after working for 2 years to achieve this designation. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation.

National Board Certification was designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide. It's the highest certification a teacher may obtain in addition to being the most respected one. Teachers who earn this designation have proven to be the most effective teachers that they can be. The impact of this certification has had an incredible impact on my own experience as a classroom teacher. Going through this process has encouraged me to look inward and observe my own teaching philosophies and challenging my ideas when it comes to my teaching philosophy. This certification has completely changed my outlook on teaching and being able to meet the educational needs of each and every one of my students. My students now have a teacher who has gone through the process of reflecting and processing their own teaching style and learning specific ways to develop a deep understanding of students and their learning environment. It is highly important that National Board Certification is a pathway for TIA designation. This process of pursuing national board is highly rigorous and requires hundreds and hundreds of hours to earn this highly favored designation. The primary objective of the NBPTS is to recognize and certify accomplished teaching practices, emphasizing the values of accountability, rigor, and pedagogical excellence. The certification is designed to identify and nurture exceptional educators who can lead the way in shaping the future of education. I am a better teacher for having gone through this incredible process. When compared to a TTESS level that one can receive from their districts, National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to TIA designation in HB2.

Robyn Cantara

Self

Houston, TX

I am a 6th grade teacher in Houston Texas. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and a mentor to candidates for National Board in my district cohort. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to the TIA designation and would like to see National Board retain the Recognized designation.

National Board certification has had a significant impact in my classroom. The year I was pursuing my certification my Emerging Bilingual students achieved the highest scores out of all EB students in my district. It helped me to strengthen my teaching by allowing me to reflect and perfect my teaching practice, which has promoted growth in my students.

It is important that National Board remain a pathway to the TIA help increase the allotment to other teachers. There are many teachers in my district who aren't able to qualify using the local designation due to the content they teach, such as fine arts teachers. This is also a great way to retain teachers. There are surrounding states that have bonuses for NBCT and have had them for years. This bonus definitely attracts those highly qualified teachers to those states.

The process to get National Board certified requires you to go through a rigorous process and you have to prove that you are highly qualified in order to achieve it. It is not just a test. Teachers have to make portfolios and write intensive essays about their teaching practice and we need to maintain our certification every 5 years. I guarantee these teachers are qualified.

National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve this pathway and help National Board Teachers retain their recognized designation.

Kimberly Gallegos, Ms.

Self

Missouri city, TX

Don't defund our public schools. While I believe there are ways to better our public school system it certainly is not giving them less money. Making sure we give all students access to well funded schools only better our communities. Reform the system, don't defund it.

Christine Anderson

self

Katy, TX

Our students desperately need more funding to be properly educated. It's very sad and embarrassing that our state is ranked so low compared to other states. We need to do better!

Rachel Hubka

Self - Parent

Austin, TX

Please vote FOR HB 2.

Texas is ranked in the bottom 10 states (41st) in the U.S. for public school funding, with around 91% of Texas students attending underfunded schools. As a parent, this is absolutely unacceptable. Please pass HB 2 to:

- Increase the Basic Allotment per student (I wish it was an even greater increase, but I am looking at this as a baby step in the right direction)
- Increase staff salaries (again, I would like to see an even bigger increase here, but will accept a move in the right direction - we are experiencing a staffing crisis in education, with teachers leaving the profession in droves because they cannot afford to provide for their families on their abysmal salaries)
- Increase special education funding (more and more students are needing special education services in Texas, and we need to be able to adequately address these needs early on in order to avoid bigger issues as the students grow older)
- Increase funding for pre-k, fine arts, and career advising (again, providing educational services at an early age can help increase student success down the road, as well as alleviate parents' need for quality childcare; fine arts programs provide students with invaluable creative experiences that help their brains learn in multidisciplinary settings; and career advising helps prepare the next generation for success in the work force which strengthens Texas's future)

Please vote in favor of HB 2! A Vote for HB 2 is a vote for Texas children.

Sara Kitterman

Self, stay at home mom to 3 children in public school

Hutto, TX

Here are some facts about education in Texas:

- Texas is consistently ranked at the bottom for education.
- When it comes to funding, Texas is in the bottom 10 states. This means Texas spends less per student on education than most other states in the country.
- Texas's basic allotment for per-student funding has not increased since 2019.
- The state is struggling to keep up with inflation and population growth.
- Districts with larger funding gaps tend to have lower student achievement ratings.
- Texas is experiencing a teacher shortage and must compete with other states with better funding who will instead attract those teachers.
- Texas's policies for pre-school only meet 4 of the 10 benchmarks for high quality pre-k.
- Not only are Texas public schools severely underfunded, but the governor is pushing for vouchers which will take away even more funding for public schools.

There is a clear correlation between funding and public school results. Our classroom dollars have been frozen for 5 years and have lost over 20% in value. Our governor's concern is pleasing wealthy donors with a tax break for their children's private education by stealing public tax dollars away from our already underfunded schools. It's time for Greg Abbott to do his job and listen to the people. It's time for Greg Abbott to fund public education.

Joyce Evans

Self

Cypress, TX

Hello - I'm a mom of 3 children that attend CFISD schools in the Cypress Texas area. Just this past year alone has been so rough for our school district thanks to the underfunding of our district. While the cost of everything in life has gone up our district along with every district in Texas has not received anything more to help the crisis. Just to give you a few examples of how this is failing our schools and our children... school buses have been cut, there are so many kids that have had to walk to and from school (2 miles) in the freezing temperatures, and ensure the terrible heat when it was 100 degrees. They are walking in unsafe conditions because of this underfunding. The late bus has been cut so kids can't play sports, get tutoring, be part of clubs if they can't get a ride because their parents (like most) work! Amazing teachers have been let go, LIBRARIES have been closed full time because they can't support full time librarians because of lack of money. The libraries had great programs to help encourage students to read that normally wouldn't like "Name That Book". The state doesn't need private school vouchers that will cost 1 Billion dollars for only 100k students. It will line pockets of private schools while also taking advantage of the system... I'm sure! If our Governor would like a "Choice" program that I keep seeing on his social media page then create schools in the state that are a choice school (like Florida). There are STEM, Art, Thater, Technical schools that people have to apply to that may be outside of the district. It's a lottery system. It's a great opportunity to do something different and will help A LOT more students than this expensive proposal. Please help our Public Schools - they need more money. These are Texas future leaders... don't let them down.

Stephanie Fritts

Self, entrepreneur

Briarcliff, TX

Vouchers make no sense for Texas parents and students. Public schools, even in affluent areas, are already woefully underfunded, the teachers are underpaid, and the students are not receiving the education they deserve. Parents who can already afford private school already have that choice, and these vouchers will only take funds away from public schools. I do not want my hard-earned taxes to go towards private schools. Your constituents do not want this, which is why you're afraid to put it on the ballot.

William Bryan

Self

Austin, TX

NO VOUCHERS! Public education for all.

Ilene Barr, Mrs.

Self

West Lake Hills, TX

As a Texas citizen and taxpayer, I urge you to reject any school voucher proposals that divert public funds away from our public schools. Our state's education system is already underfunded, and taking money from public schools to subsidize private education will only make things worse—especially for rural and low-income communities where public schools are the backbone of opportunity. How do rural communities have school choice? There is only one school.

Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. They can choose their students, set their own tuition rates, and are not required to serve all children, including those with disabilities. Meanwhile, public schools are expected to do more with less. Texas kids deserve better.

I strongly urge you to prioritize strengthening public education—by increasing teacher pay, reducing class sizes, and providing the resources all students need to succeed. Public money should stay in public schools. Please stand with Texas families and vote against school vouchers.”

Martha Nelson

Self

Austin, TX

Please raise the basic allotment by at least \$1340, to 2019 levels.

Snober Lakhani

Self

Allen, TX

This is a request to increase the basic allotment per student in public schools along with increasing the allotment for specialized. Education needs such as gifted and talented education currently funding amount does not cover differentiated learning classroom needs, which makes it a challenge for both teachers and students when the classroom dynamics are mixed and students who have different running needs are not able to get the support required

Ralph Campbell, Jr., Mr.

Self

Ft. Worth, TX

Please allocate more money. Increase allocation per student \$1,350 to us back to 2019 level. We need more certified teachers. Show you support better education for Texas students. Thank you.

Tish Smith

self

Austin, TX

As the mother of a school-aged child with special needs, I urge you to reject any school voucher proposals that divert public funds away from our public schools. Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. They can choose their students, set their own tuition rates, and are not required to serve all children, including those with disabilities. Meanwhile, public schools are expected to do more with less. Texas kids deserve better. I strongly urge you to prioritize strengthening public education—by increasing teacher pay, reducing class sizes, and providing the resources all students need to succeed. Public money should stay in public schools. Please stand with Texas families and vote against school vouchers.

Elizabeth Pannill, DVM

Self

Staples, TX

Funding needs to be increased for public schools to ensure Texas school Children and teachers have the resources for a quality education .

Laura Spraggins
After-school Educator
Austin, TX

Hello,
I am the director of an after-school program at a public elementary school. I have worked in after-school programs across the city for eight years and have seen firsthand how funding impacts students' well-being and access to resources.

The disparities between well-funded and under-resourced communities are evident—not just in school facilities like libraries and playgrounds, but in students' overall sense of comfort, engagement, and enthusiasm for learning. Adequate funding directly influences the quality of education, the availability of enriching experiences like field trips and after-school programs, and teachers' ability to support their students effectively.

In my current role, I primarily serve higher-need students and their families, working to build support systems that help all children thrive. Investing in after-school programs and public education is an investment in our students' futures, ensuring they have the opportunities and resources they deserve.

FAIR FUNDING

I support an increase in the basic allotment, a boost in special education resources, a move to enrollment-based funding, and policies that provide financial relief to our districts. Please fully fund state mandates!

BETTER SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT

In the 2022-23 school year, districts spent an additional \$2.2 billion on special education to bridge the gap between students' needs and what the state provided. That \$2.2B could have been spent on teachers, aides, counselors and other supports. Our state needs to close that gap.

KEEP PUBLIC DOLLARS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I oppose the diversion of public resources to religious, private, and home schools. Students already have a choice in where they go to school but the only place parents have a voice is in our public schools where we vote for our school board and can sit on campus and district-level advisory boards. I oppose charter school expansion and support public school funding first!

LISTEN TO AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS

Support policies that address teacher and staff shortages and improve teacher retention, like reducing class sizes and increasing teacher pay. Oppose legislation that undermines the professionalism of teachers or adds onerous administrative requirements.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Increase funding for counselors and expand mental health programs, reduce the use of exclusionary discipline, manage phones and vaping, and protect and support an equitable education environment that values diversity of race, national origin, culture, gender, religion, immigration status, learning ability and socioeconomic background. Oppose the ability of the state to restrict programs in school districts that promote acceptance and respect for all students.

I deeply care about my students, their families, and the dedicated educators, staff, and administrators who support them. Please help the youth of our state thrive by ensuring they have the resources and support they need. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Scott Campbell
Self
Austin, TX

I am concerned that the proposed level of funding is insufficient to keep our children competitive for the best careers. When job mobility is so high, it seems many of the best jobs in Texas go to non-Texans with specialized education willing to move here.

emily weems

Self

Houston, TX

This bill is all talk about supporting public education when, in reality, it doesn't and Texans are not falling for it.

Under HB 2, public schools receive just a \$220 per student increase — experts say to keep up with inflation and growing education needs we need nothing short of \$1340 per student

In comparison, charter schools would receive the same \$220 increase and an additional \$289 per student allotment through the charter facility. This is double what our public schools are receiving.

Texas has the money to do better and the refusal of lawmakers makes it clear you are not serious about doing what it takes to fund public education. Texas is failing my sons and all the children.

Jennifer Lee

Self

Cypress, TX

I oppose HB 2 and strongly believe that passing this bill will be extremely detrimental to our public schools. This bill does not support all students, especially those with special needs and for those in rural areas. We would be much better served with proper funding and support of our public schools and educators.

Stephanie Vandine

Self

Lufkin, TX

I am against the approval of HB 2 and urge our elected officials to vote NO. I support the funding of public schools, and I want our public schools to be funded at the highest level possible. HB 2 would weaken our public schools. PUBLIC money (TAX PAYER \$\$) should go to PUBLIC schools. The majority of people do NOT want this.

Angelia Anderson
Three Rivers ISD
THREE RIVERS, TX

My name is Angelia Anderson, and I serve as the Director of Finance of Three Rivers ISD I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2 (HB2) and its critical funding provisions for Texas public schools.

Every day, I see the impact of school funding decisions on students, teachers, and communities. Rising costs, outdated funding formulas, and financial pressures make it harder to sustain the resources our students deserve. HB2 takes important steps to address these challenges, and I urge the Legislature to ensure these key provisions remain in the final bill:

- Small & Mid-Size Allotments
 - o Help districts provide instructional support, academic programs, and competitive salaries
 - o Schools like [District Name] depend on these funds to maintain equity
- Basic Allotment & Inflation Adjustment
 - o The Basic Allotment increase is needed but still falls short
 - o To recruit and retain teachers and staff, we must invest more in salaries and stability
 - o Future funding should include an inflation index to ensure schools don't fall behind as costs rise, this 3% increase in the basic allotment does not come close to covering the 16-25% rise in cost we have experienced in transportation, property insurance, maintenance and operations costs as well as instructional supplies.
- State Property Value Study (PVS) Discrepancies
 - o Many districts in our area, including George West ISD, have suffered funding reductions due to discrepancies between state-adopted and local property values
 - o When a district fails the PVS, the state assumes it has more local revenue than it actually does, cutting state aid
 - o These inaccurate valuations create instability, making it difficult to plan for staffing and programs
- Rising Property Casualty Insurance Costs
 - o As property values rise, so do insurance premiums, straining district budgets
 - o Three Rivers ISD has seen insurance costs rise by 100% , doubling, forcing cuts to programs or increasing risk by increasing deductible and lowering coverage
 - o This issue is worse in coastal and disaster-prone areas, where coverage is harder to maintain
 - o Rising state property valuations further drive up costs, adding to financial strain
- Special Education Funding Adjustments
 - o HB2 improves special education funding by shifting to a needs-based model
 - o Provides funding for initial evaluations, freeing up resources for direct student services
 - o Ensures schools can support students with therapies, interventions, and accommodations
- HB2 is a step in the right direction, but these provisions must remain
 - o Schools cannot afford to fall behind—funding must be fair and predictable

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Texas public schools

William Philips
Self - Project Manager
Austin, TX

It has come to my attention that parents of students being referred to private residential treatment centers are not also being given information on admission to State Supported Living Center. They need to be given SSLC information during the ARD. My son has been at an SSLC since 2009 and it has changed our lives. They provide a service that other parents of intellectually and developmentally disabled children should consider. They should have a choice.

Adele Nelson, Dr.

Self

Austin, TX

Dear representatives, I write to advocate for increasing the basic allotment by \$1340. Both of my children (11 & 8) are in public school & are receiving exceptional services from professional, credentialed & dedicated teachers & administrators. Our schools need & deserve more support. Let me share that my son has special needs & we looked at private schools & were told they were not equipped to support him. We instead transferred him to a better resourced & better led public elementary school & he has thrived & is now in Gifted & Talented. A well-funded & we'll-led public school has been a literal lifesaver for our son & my family. Private schools are not the solution to our education system! I believe firmly that public education is in the foundation of our society, giving children (& their families) the opportunity to know & build trust with people from different backgrounds. I attended an elite private college prep school & it academically prepared me for college, but with huge deficits in understanding society as a whole. Public education deserves all the resources of our state! Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Adele Nelson

Guyla Carlton

Self Retired Teacher, parent, tax paying citizen

Lufkin, TX

Public education is the bedrock of democracy. Society benefits with all children receiving equal opportunity, funding in education.

Rachel Martino

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching

Dallas, TX

National Board Certification is a rigorous, merit-based achievement that identifies and elevates great teaching. I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to a TIA-recognized designation in HB2. If we trust board-certified doctors with our health and board-certified lawyers with our legal needs, we should equally recognize board-certified teachers for the expertise they bring to educating the next generation.

I am a dedicated educator at a Title One school in Hurst, TX, committed to advancing the profession through excellence in teaching. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and actively support and mentor educators pursuing their certification. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation.

Going through the National Board Certification process transformed my teaching. It pushed me to reflect deeply, refine my instructional strategies, and better meet the needs of my students. I've seen the direct impact in my classroom—higher student engagement, stronger academic growth, and more meaningful connections with families. Additionally, mentoring other teachers through this process has strengthened our professional community and elevated instructional practices across our state.

It's essential that National Board Certification remains a pathway for TIA designation. This process ensures that accomplished teachers are recognized and retained, particularly in high-need schools where their impact is most crucial. The funding attached to TIA is a vital retention tool, helping to keep exceptional educators in the classroom and broadening access to well-deserved recognition when local designation systems may be limited.

Quite frankly, National Board Certification should generate an even higher designation than it currently does, given the rigor of completing the process. Becoming Board-certified requires teachers to undergo a rigorous, often multi-year, process of demonstrating, refining, and evaluating their practice—showcasing deep content knowledge, instructional expertise, and a measurable impact on student learning. It is a distinction that only a fraction of educators achieve. Elevating this designation to reflect its true rigor and impact would not only honor the work of accomplished educators but also incentivize more teachers to pursue and maintain this gold standard of excellence in teaching.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan Colburn, Dr.

Self - Teacher

Georgetown, TX

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

On a personal note, with all due respect, my wife and I are both public school teachers. Bottom line--after the Biden administration's trashing of our economy, we can no longer afford to teach and live in this area. We both have 2 and three jobs to just barely scrape by. Don't we deserve better so we can better serve our students?

Lizet Villagrana

Self

Austin, TX

Public Education is underfunded, please consider bringing the allocation back to 2019 standards, at a minimum, and raise the allotment by \$1,340.

Abbey Lengel

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose Texas voucher bills, as they take vital resources away from public schools. Instead, we should increase the basic allotment to \$1300 for public schools and fund them based on student enrollment, not attendance. Let's ensure schools have the stability and resources needed to educate every child, regardless of attendance challenges. Let's invest in public education, not undermine it with vouchers.

Kristen roden

Self/ teacher

Magnolia, TX

Don't defund our schools. Why would anyone think this bill is the answer?

Rodrigo Pena, Dr.

San Diego ISD

San Diego, TX

My name is Dr. Rodrigo H. Pena, and I serve as the superintendent of San Diego ISD. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2 (HB2) and its critical funding provisions for Texas public schools.

Every day, I see the impact of school funding decisions on students, teachers, and communities. Rising costs, outdated funding formulas, and financial pressures make it harder to sustain the resources our students deserve. HB2 takes important steps to address these challenges, and I urge the Legislature to ensure these key provisions remain in the final bill:

- Small & Mid-Size Allotments
 - o Help districts provide instructional support, academic programs, and competitive salaries
 - o Schools like San Diego ISD depend on these funds to maintain equity
- Basic Allotment & Inflation Adjustment
 - o The Basic Allotment increase is needed but still falls short
 - o To recruit and retain teachers and staff, we must invest more in salaries and stability
 - o Future funding should include an inflation index to ensure schools don't fall behind as costs rise. For example, the basic allotment should be increased yearly at least 2 percent since the average yearly inflation is 4 percent. This will allow school districts to maintain buildings, student programs, and staff salaries.
- State Property Value Study (PVS) Discrepancies
 - o Many districts in our area, including San Diego ISD, have suffered funding reductions due to discrepancies between state-adopted and local property values
 - o When a district fails the PVS, the state assumes it has more local revenue than it actually does, cutting state aid
 - o These inaccurate valuations create instability, making it difficult to plan for staffing and programs
 - o The State should provide school districts funding based on local certified property values.
 - o Another solution could be that school districts receive all funding through one funding source. This source will be through the foundation and special revenue programs only. In other words, the tax revenue funding source should be eliminated because it does not provide equity to all districts. Property rich school districts are allowed to keep a percentage of the surplus and property poor school districts and rural school district are short funded with state assigned property values which reduce funding that eventually impact student achievement.
- Rising Property Casualty Insurance Costs
 - o As property values rise, so do insurance premiums, straining district budgets
 - o San Diego ISD has seen insurance costs rise by \$25,000, forcing cuts to programs
 - o This issue is worse in coastal and disaster-prone areas, where coverage is harder to maintain
 - o Rising state property valuations further drive up costs, adding to financial strain
- Special Education Funding Adjustments
 - o HB2 improves special education funding by shifting to a needs-based model
 - o Provides funding for initial evaluations, freeing up resources for direct student services

Thank you.

Mark DiBella
YES Prep Public Schools
Houston, TX

My name is Mark DiBella, and I'm the CEO of YES Prep Public Schools in Houston. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,621 less per student than traditional districts. This difference is driven by unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget in order to cover facilities costs.

As a public charter school, YES Prep cannot levy local property taxes the way a traditional ISD can. We have had to be creative with our school facilities, repurposing old buildings into schools. Right now we have secondary campuses in a converted grocery store and an old bank. We have found innovative solutions to fill the gap, but there are some things we cannot compromise on.

In 2021, there was a shooting at one of our campuses. The recently installed bulletproof vestibule delayed the gunman, and law enforcement was able to respond before we lost anyone. Providing facilities funding is not simply a matter of upgrading buildings, it can save lives.

Facilities funding also impacts our student achievement, especially for the special education students that make up 11% of our student body. To equip a special education classroom requires a 50% increase in cost over our standard classrooms. At YES Prep we believe every student should have the resources they need to thrive. Facilities costs shouldn't make the difference between a student succeeding or not.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for all its children, families, and educators.

Mark DiBella

Thomas Clegg
Self- Teacher
Spring, TX

I am a high school special education teacher in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. I am [a National Board Certified Teacher. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation. National Board Certification allowed me to grow in my practice at a time where I wanted a new challenge. Teachers who are board certified have the "gold standard" and most recognized certification. We need to continue to grow our number of NBCTs in Texas, and TIA is one of the best ways to do it.

neal bryson
Self
Dallas, TX

I oppose using public monies for funding private schools completely and vehemently. Our public schools are a foundational component in preparing our state for the future and are in need of improvement rather than funding private schools which have little to no oversight or accountability. Use of our tax dollars for a small group of people rather than the good of the general public is neither the intent of the foundation of our state nor the desire of the general population.

Regardless of the published information that much of the funding goes to people already in private schools and the extra cost to families for uniforms, transportation, etc., government's responsibility is to provide for the improvement of the entire population, and this is best served by improving the public schools which are available to all students. Please use the taxpayer's monies for public school improvements, not for private schools.

Georgia Kimmel

American Association of University Women of Texas

Houston, TX

The American Association of University Women of Texas (AAUW Texas) is grateful for the opportunity to offer written testimony on HB 2.

AAUW Texas and AAUW TX Branches are part of the AAUW, an organization of 140,000 women advocating for women and girls since 1881, with special emphasis on education and research. AAUW Texas supports a strong system of public education because it is the foundation of a democratic society and the key to improving economic prosperity.

AAUW Texas supports adequate, equitable, and responsible funding for and access to quality public education for all students. Currently many Texas school districts are operating in the red, having to close schools, cut staff, cut programs, and put teacher pay raises on hold. There were no increases in school funding though the basic allotment, during the 2021 and 2023 Texas legislative sessions. Federal COVID and ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funding filled some gaps but those temporary supplemental funding resources have now ended. The basic allotment of \$6,160 per student has not changed since 2019. The cumulative inflation from 2019 to 2025 is estimated to be around 21% with an average annual inflation rate of roughly 3.5% across this period. To adequately fund schools the basic allotment for the 2025-2026 school year should be as much as \$7453, an increase of \$1232.

AAUW appreciates the increase to the basic allotment in HB 2, but \$220 does not meet the funding needs we outlined above. We support a more substantial increase to the basic allotment to accomplish the following:

- Increase student outcomes in every situation according to aggregate per-pupil spending;
- Improve Texas's ranking in public school per pupil funding -currently 44th nationally;
- Ensure distribution of additional funding across all school districts;
- Enable school to hire and retain highly qualified teachers, librarians, counselors, nurses, and support staff with particular focus on raising teacher pay - current average teacher salary in Texas is \$60,716 and ranks 30th in the nation;
- Allow schools to invest in quality curriculum materials including books, software, subscriptions and a variety of media;
- Reduce over-reliance on local property taxes for school funding; and
- Permit schools to upgrade, maintain, and secure uncrowded purpose-built facilities.

Specific parts of the bill that we hope you will continue to work to address:

- Funding does not include inflation-based adjustments. That means school administrators will have to fight for new funding every year to help them keep up with costs.
- Funding is not based on student enrollment instead of daily attendance, which is a less accurate reflection of the true cost districts face in running schools and preparing for all kids.

Thank you for this opportunity for AAUW Texas to comment on HB 2.

In appreciation,

Georgia Kimmel,

AAUW TX Public Policy Chair

Sarah Rivlin, Ms.

Community Voices for Public Education

Houston, TX

Schools desperately need funding. There are not enough adults in the building. Teachers and staff are doing the work of more than one person. Please stop starving our schools. Kids can't learn this way.

Elizabeth Lalor

Self

Crosby, TX

Fully fund Sped

Leah Raley

Self

Austin, TX

This does not include nearly enough money allotted per student to even keep up with inflation let alone supply sufficient resources to pupils at our public schools. It's an embarrassment that the great state of Texas provides less money per child than most of our 50 states of America! Please consider more funding for our already struggling schools!

Sarah Moulden, National Board Certified Teacher

Self/teacher

Cleburne, TX

Forty dollars and seventy cents. This is the monetary value-add per day of 20 years of teaching experience in my district. The difference between a first year teacher's salary and mine is \$7,611 a year--a little over \$400 per year of experience.

I earned my Master's degree, not only to serve students who didn't have a face-to-face instructor but also to improve my opportunity to make more money. In most districts in my area, that stipend makes you \$1200. I'll have that degree paid off in about ten years. There are very few pathways for teachers to make more money. First, we can become administrators. There are a couple of problems with this: 1) not everyone wants to be an administrator, and 2) every teacher cannot be an administrator--limited positions exist. The second option is to leave education in hopes of a career that will pay more over time for requisite experience.

TIA was an option that grew me as a professional while allowing me to make money based on my experience and expertise. Our school presented their plan...and it wasn't approved by TEA. The only route to being acknowledged in this system was through National Board Certification. I certified in December 2024, and I should be receiving my first disbursement by August of 2025. A way for esteemed teachers (3 in 1000 in the state of Texas) to be noticed and recognized (Recognized!) apart from a system that uses standardized testing (hundreds of millions of dollars per year) is vital. So you want to take away student funding and the incentive for National Board Certification that has proven to accelerate student growth up to two full months compared to a non-National Board Certified teacher? Even your HB 1416 acknowledges that a student who has a National Board Certified Teacher for a tested subject area does not need to serve accelerated learning hours. National Board Certification and the TIA designation says: "Way to go! We acknowledge your hard work. You have earned a distinction. Thanks for showing up for Texas students in a big way by making yourself better." More pay, earned pay, deserved pay for the work I do every day. This is one way that I saw a path to the chasm between 0 and 20 years experience.

National Board Certification should not be "less than" in an incentive plan. TIA pathways do not exist for every district and every position...unless they work toward National Board Certification. This creates more opportunities for teachers to grow professionally and benefit student learning in the process.

You need experienced educators. You need true professionals. You need National Board Certified Teachers filling your classrooms. But you also need to work to pay veteran teachers for the valuable experience they bring to support underskilled teachers, to refine the curriculum and other existing systems, and to dutifully serve the students of Texas public schools. Keep National Board Certification as a pathway to added income for teachers and added outcome for students.

Michelle Glick

Self - Teacher

Missouri City, TX

I do not understand why vouchers would fund \$10,000 for private schools when the funding for public school students is set below \$6500. Public schools have to provide more services with those funds including provide books, transportation, etc that private schools are not required to fund. How is this equitable? What is the rationale? If vouchers have to pass because the governor is holding public education funding hostage, then at least make it equitable and do right by ALL Texas children, not just the wealthy.

Celia Zamadics

Self

AUSTIN, TX

I am a retired public school teacher. Public education is essential to Texas. Public schools have educated millions and it is time to make our schools stronger, not weaker. I strongly oppose vouchers. Why not invest in our future and make our public schools the best in the nation. We need an educated society because it is good for EVERYONE. Please. No vouchers. Let's invest in our future by making our schools the very best.

Emily Probasco

Self

Dallas, TX

I would like to advocate for more \$ for public education, raising the basic allotment by \$1340 (to get back to 2019 levels)

Lauren Muskiet, Mrs

Self- public School Counselor

Spring, TX

As a public School Counselor and teacher of over 25 years who works with Special Education and At Risk students on a daily basis, I see first hand how underfunded mandates impact our school. Texas legislators have an obligation to stand up for public schools, which impact 90% of school children and families. I urge you to raise the basic allotment by at least \$1000 to account for inflation, fully fund Special Education, and give teachers and school staff members a raise. The success of our schools is paramount to the success of Texas. You can't denigrate public educators and public schools and expect people to want to join a profession where teachers make less than they did 10 years ago. Shame on Abbott and all who support his voucher scam. I, for one, will be watching to see who truly supports public education and will make sure my votes and the votes of my family and friends support those who do. Do better for Texas school children and families.

Monica Abram Jamilla, Mrs.

Self, Educational Diagnostician

Tomball, TX

Our students are our future! We need an increase in finances to get the resources we need to help educate our future. We need 2,000 per student in public education. Teachers also need a raise! Teachers work very hard and put in countless hours and are not compensated for the amount of time and money spent to be a successful teacher in the Classroom. All teachers need a 10,000 raise!!

Kim Hatton, Ms.

Self/Educator-Cellist-Speaker

HOUSTON, TX

I have watched. I have seen. I have heard. What have I watched, seen, and heard? Enough! I have heard elements of confusion in regards to a place that proposes to support education, but somehow allows distractions of other events and causation to dispel the truth. Of course education should be invested, in by the state of Texas, the country, excuse me the state we live. The spirit of Texas, right, where we want our children to learn and develop from effective education, not hierarchical tiers to climb and can't spell, do math or put 2 sentences together. Yes, there is a realization of unknown reasons why education is said to not be funded or a known fact of where to find the money. Sure, "Show me the money" is a common phrase. We know most, if not all, in congress has a basic education. Why is public education important? It is the basis of building stepping stones for a foundational education rooted and grounded in principles linking further education and training for the future. Gaining access to educational monies has to be determined where it is selected and posed to go in distribution. Funding schools versus backing-off is not explained in definition or how approaching decisions are made. When school campuses have insightful assessments to educational needs, whether basic to critical resources defined as an educational or means to access learning and focuses of learning for developmental outcomes. In this day and age with shifting, moving, and changes in technology innovations involving trust and spending goes both ways. Proof often determines need including how spending occurs on campuses and in districts. Whether we look at the private sector or public sector of education, if money is available and needed, then it should be used. If money is allotted and set aside for a specific purpose, then it should be explained in regards to why it is not to be allocated from the state to districts and supposed, allotted settings. Education is important. It is not just a word we toss to the side when reading a resume, or a fun book, interviewing for a position, or keep distance from an illiterate or non reader. Education demands listening. My hope is we listen to one another to be heard. From Kim at Acoustic Expression, "Where note-able music and notable speech leads to sounds."

Rebe Long

Self

Dallas, TX

alismithtx 9h

From Create Mode >

Alright. Well in light of that, I'd like my public record comment to be.

1) Requirements on voucher receiving private schools to have these same types of standards and services as public schools to be able to

actually enable new students to attend

2) Public school teacher salary

raises

3) Basic allotment increase of \$1000

at minimum, ideally more than voucher amount. Or creative funding measures that will immediately get money into classrooms equivalent to this amount.

Angela Guy

Self

TOMBALL, TX

I am a visual arts teacher at a high school in Cypress Fairbanks ISD. I am a National Board Certified Teacher. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation. National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to a TIA recognized designation in HB2.

Patricia Oglesby

Self retired Texas teacher

Dumas, TX

Please do not rob Texas children and hinder our dedicated Texas educators in their enormous task of educating all Texas children by limiting funds. Also, diverting funds from public education to provide private education creates a deficit for our public school children.

Hannah Hensdill

Self- Teacher

Houston, TX

I commend the Texas House for maintaining National Board Certification (NBC) as part of the Recognized distinction within the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) in HB2. Recognizing National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) is essential for attracting and retaining top educators who significantly enhance student learning outcomes.

However, I must express concern that the proposed \$220 increase in per-student funding falls substantially short of addressing the financial challenges our public schools face. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation in the United States has risen by 23.45% since the last adjustment to the Basic Allotment in 2019. To merely keep pace with inflation, the per-student allotment would need to increase by approximately \$1,444.52. The proposed \$220 increment is insufficient to meet the escalating costs incurred by our schools.

Moreover, state mandates for security and special education impose significant financial burdens on school districts. The recent requirement for armed security officers on every campus, as stipulated by House Bill 3, presents substantial costs. While the legislation provides an additional \$15,000 per campus and increases per-student security funding from \$9.72 to \$10, this funding is inadequate. The annual cost of employing a qualified armed security officer is approximately \$85,000, leaving districts to cover the substantial shortfall.

Similarly, special education services are underfunded. Texas schools currently face a \$2.2 billion gap between the funding provided and the actual costs of delivering mandated special education services. This shortfall forces districts to divert funds from other critical programs to meet legal obligations, thereby straining resources across the board.

In light of these financial challenges, I urge the legislature to reassess and substantially increase the per-student funding allotment. Adequate funding is imperative to ensure that our public schools can meet mandated requirements, attract and retain high-quality educators, and provide safe, supportive learning environments for all students.

Matt Smith, Dr.

Arlington ISD

Arlington, TX

We respectfully ask the committee to consider the following information in your deliberations. Arlington ISD appreciates the proposed increase in the basic allotment and is aligned with the Texas House on dedicating significant portions of increases in the basic allotment to compensation increases. For five consecutive years, AISD has offered 4% raises to all employees in order to attract and retain highly qualified professionals and provide adequate pay to our hardworking educators and support staff. Additional increases to the basic allotment would be beneficial to students in Arlington ISD. We ask our legislators to address the inflation impact realized since 2019 and increase the basic allotment to levels that ensure the buying power experienced in 2019 which equates to \$1340 added. This will allow us to continue prioritizing the compensation of our teaching staff while addressing the increased costs of all goods and services.

Arlington ISD also appreciates the focus on increasing special education funding for our students with special education needs. Statewide, school district costs for special education exceed state funding by \$2.2 billion. In FY2024, Arlington ISD was underfunded \$18,944,492 on special education (using TEA's near final summary of finances dated Oct 24, 2024). The number of students qualifying for special education services has increased sharply over the last five years, with 13% of our students now eligible for special education. We ask the legislature to fully fund our special education in our district and throughout the state.

We also respectfully ask our legislators to fund schools based on enrolled students as opposed to the current funding model. As the public knows, we have to prepare and resource schools based on the number of students enrolled in our district.

Ultimately, we are asking our legislators to provide sustainable, accountable, and predictable funding for students in Texas public schools.

Shawna Ostlie

Self- retired special education teacher

Fort Worth, TX

Please carefully consider the way funding is provided for special education students. The number of students in special education, including those with Dyslexia, continues to rise. Please adequately fund schools so appropriate staffing and programs can be provided.

DALE RUDIN

self

Austin, TX

Support public education for all. We don't need an elitist, segregated system that supports the private sector. Make public education better.

Jom Lamkin

Self

Lufkin, TX

My name is Jon Lamkin. Public schools have been and remain the cornerstone for educating Texas children. I am seriously concerned about the proposed \$6,380 per pupil allotment in HB2. Public schools carry the burden for educating students ranging from gifted, talented, STEM to those students with special needs. The fact that you would allocate \$10,000 per pupil through the voucher program to fund schools with little oversight and no transparency to the general tax paying public is a disturbing betrayal of responsibility to Texas children and to Texas taxpayers. At the very least you should maintain funding parity with the voucher program and provide a funding level of \$10,000 per pupil for Texas public school children. You owe it to them and us to do so. Make the right choice and increase public school funding to \$10,000 per pupil. Thank you.

Shelley Tatum

self - retired teacher

Lufkin, TX

The proposed allotment of \$6380 per student included in HB2 is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Texas public schools. The miserly increase of \$220 after six years of no increase to the allotment is simply insufficient to meet the need. My home school district, Lufkin ISD, was recently forced to close two elementary schools negatively impacting the lives of more than 500 students, teachers and staff. For the last six years, this legislator has saddled public schools with unfunded mandates to improve campus security among other sometimes necessary, sometimes innovative, sometimes unworkable requirements. Without adequate funding, districts struggle to meet these demands, are forced to make cuts to other necessary items, and are forced to make decisions, like closing campuses, that have a destructive impact on their communities. But as legislators, you already know this. The question before you now is whether or not you care. If it takes \$10,000 to educate a student in a private school, it is ridiculous to turn around and declare that public schools can educate a student for \$3620 less. You can yammer on about choice, but you know that for large numbers of parents and students their local public school is the only option. Many areas have no private schools available. Private school tuition, in many cases, exceeds the voucher amount. Private schools are not required to take any student who applies. Private schools can dismiss students at will, sending them back to underfunded public schools. If the intention is for public schools to improve through competition, then this legislature must create a level playing field for that competition by narrowing the gap between funding per pupil.

Doretha Allen, Dr
Texas National Board Coaliton for Teaching/Educator
DeSoto, TX

I am a National Board Certified Teacher and I want to retain NBCTs in TIA at the recognized level. I attained my certification while teaching at Charles Rice Learning Center in south Dallas. It was a school where the statistics would have other outcomes for my students. The rigorous process transformed my teaching where I put my students at the center of every instructional decision I made. The NB process made me a reflective practitioner. I questioned everything that I did in my class and if it didn't impact my students' learning, I stopped doing it. Being the first NBCT in my building, I became an in house expert and others looked to me as I set a new standard in excellence. This is what we want at every school in Texas.
Please support the retention of NBCTs in the recognized level.

Teresa Myers
Self
Emory, TX

No schools should be funded more than our public schools and we want public schools funded to the fullest. Not doing that is a disgrace to our state and the people you serve

Lynne Hester
Self / Grandparent
Georgetown, TX

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically:

1. HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase is insulting; falling far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
2. Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
3. Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
4. Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our district's staff. IF we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
5. Along with performance -based bonuses every year the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
6. Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Sydney Platis
"self" retired educator
New Braunfels, TX

As a retired public school educator, mother of 2 public school-educated children, voter, and taxpayer, I oppose the use of public money (our taxes) being used for private schools, parochial schools, and charter schools. More funds are needed in public schools to prepare students for adult life, provide fine arts programs for students to explore their various interests, and create opportunities for students to become a part of something bigger than themselves in supporting sports, UIL activities, clubs, and all of the other ways that public schools serve their students. Students with special needs, required adaptations, and learning disabilities are also valuable clients of the public school system that won't receive the same services in a private school environment. Because of these reasons I am firmly opposed to vouchers for private, charter, and home school students.

Eric Higginbotham
Self, public schools educator
Little Elm, TX

As both a public school educator and a parent, I am deeply concerned about the continued underfunding of Texas public schools and the push for school vouchers. I urge you to prioritize fully funding our public schools at an inflation-adjusted level equivalent to 2019 funding and ensuring inflation-adjusted pay raises for educators. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, and public dollars should be invested in strengthening our public schools—not diverting funds to private institutions with little to no accountability.

The Texas Constitution makes it clear that the legislature has a duty to support and maintain a strong system of public education. Article 7, Section 1 states:

“It shall be the duty of the Legislature of this State, to make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of a system of Public Free Schools.”

This is a constitutional responsibility, not a suggestion. However, since 2019, inflation has significantly increased the cost of running schools, while state funding has failed to keep pace. School districts are struggling to retain quality teachers, provide essential resources, and maintain safe, modern facilities. Without proper funding, class sizes grow, support services shrink, and students—especially those in rural and economically disadvantaged communities—suffer the consequences. Restoring funding to at least pre-pandemic levels, adjusted for inflation, is the bare minimum Texas must do to fulfill this obligation.

Additionally, teachers and school staff have faced rising costs of living while salaries have stagnated. If Texas wants to attract and retain talented educators, it must provide pay raises that keep up with inflation. Our teachers shape the future of Texas, and they deserve fair compensation for their dedication and expertise.

School vouchers would only worsen these challenges by siphoning taxpayer dollars away from public schools and directing them to private institutions that are not held to the same standards. Texas cannot afford to weaken its public education system by funding private schools that are not required to serve all students, follow state curriculum standards, or ensure financial transparency.

I urge you to stand with Texas families and educators by rejecting school vouchers and committing to fully funding our public schools. You have the power—and the constitutional duty—to ensure that Texas students receive the education they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and to seeing real action to support Texas public schools.

Kim Renfro, M.Ed.
Self. Retired Public School Educator
Burleson, TX

As a public school educator for 17 years, I can attest there was never enough money for our students. I am retired, but during my time in the classroom I spent thousands of dollars of my own money to purchase supplies needed for students. Every teacher did the same thing. Copy paper, classroom books, white board markers, supplies for children who could not afford items from the posted supply list: these are a few of the items I and fellow teachers bought for our students year after year.

Do NOT take a single penny away from our grossly underfunded Texas public school program. Not one cent. People from all parts of the Conservative to Liberal spectrum do NOT want our public schools to decline. I have repeatedly asked Gov.

Abbott to a public elementary, middle and high school in every Texas county. Ask the people what they want. See the devastation that underfunding causes. Legislators, our children need you to be brave legislators

Elizabeth Bushaw

self

Austin, TX

I ask the committee to please listen to their constituents when it comes to HB2. Overwhelmingly, the Texans do not support this bill. Overwhelming the people in the state of Texas want amazing, competitive, well-funded public schools in this state. I worry what this bill will do to our public schools all over the state, but especially those schools in vulnerable rural communities that do not have private education options and their public schools will suffer from underfunding. So many students rely on their schools for so much more than just an education. These students rely on their teachers for advice, guidance, and mentorship. If we continue to not focus on how to fund our public schools, we will lose amazing educators in this state who are the ones that take care of our children. We can not be competitive in the public sphere when you are not making the starting line at the same spot for privatized institutions. By passing this voucher bill, wealthy families will get a tuition break, and yet their children will never be held to the same standards the state continues to hold students in public education . Please take a stand against Governor Abbot's vision for education in Texas. We are trying to be loud, we are trying to be heard, we want better for the next generation.

Lourdes Gonzalez

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I, Lourdes Gonzalez, lifetime Texas resident and tax payer, strongly oppose HB 2. I attended public schools in Fort Worth, Texas and now my children attend the same public schools I attended. I ask that you don't support this bill and further strain our public schools financially. These children, including mine, are the future of our state and country. We like to say that "Everything is bigger in Texas" well why not apply that saying to the funding our public school systems receives. We parents are outraged that our children are being held hostage by politics in Austin and that their education is being affected. We will no longer tolerate it and we will vote accordingly. Our children's education is not up for sale and much less should they be used as political pawns.

Heather Roell, Ms

Self

Austin, TX

This bill, while heading in the right direction, is too small we need to increase the basic allotment way more than what's here. Give more money to our public schools. Texas is way behind in student funding than most of the country.

REBECCA JOHNSON

Self, Activity Director

GARLAND, TX

I am vehemently against this bill. Texas is dead last in education. This will make it even worse. I see what the bill is doing and it must not pass. Have some respect for your constituents, who are not stupid. We are asking you to do your job or we can fire you in your next election. We are watching all you do.

Bonnie Powers

Self Medical Technologist

Kerrville, TX

Please vote against HB2&3. It would hurt our public schools that contain the vast majority of the students. Texas schools already perform towards the bottom compared to the rest of the 49 states.

Pattie Davis

Myself..?

Bridgeport, TX

I am a special education teacher with 25+ years experience in teaching. Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education.

Glenn Hutchinson, Dr.

self - parent

Fort Worth, TX

We need more support for public schools. \$229 is not enough. Let's stop giving more facility money to charter schools and support our public school system.

Shannon Reynolds, Retired Public School Educator

Self/retired School Counselor

Willow Park, TX

Please stop allowing the funding of public school be attached to the passing of vouchers. Fund public school properly and immediately. Proper funding should include pay raises for all teachers, including Aides, Counselors, Librarians, Diagnosticians, and Administrators.

Erica Stremlau

Self, mom, veterinarian

Austin, TX

I am very concerned about public education in this state. My daughter is in 2nd grade at a title 1 school in RRISD. I see from my volunteer efforts at the school that school funding is a huge problem. Schools are having trouble recruiting enough teachers partly due to low salaries. Please greatly increase the amount allocated per student, have it increase from year to year based on inflation, and have it based on school enrollment instead of attendance. Do you have any plans in place in case federal school funding goes away? The bill needs incentives for teacher recruitment and retention.

The per student allocation that this bill allows is insulting, especially as compared to the \$10,000 per student allotment being proposed for private schools. This state needs a strong public education system to maintain property values and for businesses to have quality applicants to hire.

Hunter Reynolds

Self/Law Student

Willow Park, TX

To the committee: The state needs to support our rural public schools and rural teachers. The state needs to implement a system where the basic allotment keeps up with inflation, instead of waiting on the Legislative vote every two years. The state needs to reduce the regulations coming from the Texas Education Agency. That agency is bloated.

The teacher incentive allotment program is way too limited and does not really improve teacher performance. Obviously, teachers are not in the career for the money. Limiting who gets a raise is wrong. Teachers face too much diversity of adversity to be paid according to this system; teacher A may have a class of naturally highly intelligent children while teacher B has a class full of disadvantaged children. Just give all teachers the raise they deserve.

And this session, the state should not pass unfunded mandates. Fund school security.

HB 2 needs to be amended in several places, the increases in funding are not quite enough.

Paul Bennett

Kaufman

Kaufman, TX

I cannot find one person in my group of friends, family and coworkers that supports this welfare for the rich.

Mireille Perret

Self, agent

Houston, TX

Please raise the basic allotment by at least \$1340, to 2019 levels.

Keri Weaver
myself
Austin, TX

There is nothing more vital to our state and our communicates than our public schools. Please fund them appropriately! This is the future of Texas. If you provide vouchers to families for private schools, private school will just charge more. Its inevitable. Schools are the backbone of our communities and neighborhoods. You are destroying Texas but not funding public education adequately. Do better! No on vouchers and no on starving our public schools!

Stacy Frenchwood, Dr.
self - Retired Educator
Richmond, TX

Subject: Support for HB2 – Enhancing Education in Texas

Dear Members of the Committee on Public Education,

I am writing to express my support for HB2, particularly the increase in the basic allotment. This proposed increase is essential for improving educational outcomes for students across Texas, especially in the critical areas of Math, Science, and Reading. By ensuring that schools have the resources and tools needed to support students, we can make significant strides in raising proficiency levels.

Additionally, I strongly support the provisions for staff salary increases, which are crucial for attracting and retaining certified teachers, particularly for foundational curriculum courses. As it stands, many new graduates can secure jobs that offer significantly higher salaries than those available in education. To attract the best and brightest individuals to serve in Texas classrooms, we must ensure that education remains a competitive career choice, both in terms of professional development and financial compensation.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters and for your continued efforts to positively impact the future of both teachers and students in Texas.

Sincerely,
Dr. Stacy Frenchwood

Tina Lacey
Self--Retired Public Education Teacher
CLARENDON, TX

As a former school teacher, I oppose vouchers or education savings plans, especially as a special education teacher. School choice is not wrong, but it is wrong to provide more money to students attending private schools than what a public school student gets. The majority of students attend a public school. It will be extremely hard for all to attend a private school, especially if you live in a rural area. They are few and far between. I get that you all want to dismantle public education, but it serves a purpose for many individuals. Parents are struggling now, and adding to the burden of more fees for uniforms, tuition, and whatever else is needed will put more pressure on them. In public education, we have to take all kinds of students. Since I taught special education, I am for those students. They deserve an education! Public education needs to be funded more. Private education is a choice, and taxpayers' money should not be going to support those parents who choose that route. Please implore you to do what your constituents want and not where the money leads or where individuals pressure you. Texas students deserve an education with lawmakers who support them instead of destroying something valuable.

Heather McGullam

Self - Parent, Commercial Real Estate Manager

Richmond, TX

How does the State propose to pay for all these increases to funding when school districts around the state are already having to shutter campuses and cut programs? Texas cannot keep teachers on staff, curriculum has been highjacked by far right ideologies, the Republicans are hamstringing districts ability to raise monies with property taxes - and yet we can somehow afford to fund private school educations? This is a travesty and a crime against the children of the State of Texas. I implore the Texas House to do the jobs you were elected to do and uphold the Texas Constitution - fund public education fully and improve the system for all students before seeking to privatize education in order to line the pockets of wealthy out of state players.

Andrew Garcia

Self - Sr Risk Analyst

McKinney, TX

Proper funding for public schools is critical to having a healthy and function society in the future. School vouchers will only further deplete scare resources and funnel money to private corporations that return a worse return (overall eduction) in the majority of cases. Stop benefiting the rich who already have too much, and contribute to the overall health and success of the state we ALL live in.

Rebekah Olsen

Self, stay at home mom

Austin, TX

Please consider increasing the per student allotment from \$220 to the full \$1500 needed to adjust for inflation from 2019. I want my daughter to have the best Texas public education possible and that starts with funding!

Lauren Silinonte

Self, care navigator

Austin, TX

Please don't take money away from the public schools. Our public schools need more funding. They don't need money taken away to make it easier for well-off families to send their children to private school

Carlos Verdonk

self, MD, retired

Georgetown, TX

HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in a positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year period of hyperinflation.

Specifically --- • HB2 provides for an increase in the base student allotment of a paltry \$220, from \$ 6,160 to \$ 6,380. This increase falls short of the \$ 1,500 needed to compensate for the impact of 5 years of inflation, and to set a new baseline going forward.

- Safety mandates must be fully funded.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That can only happen only the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Kristin Krom
self / household mgmt
Fulshear, TX

I strongly oppose Educational Savings Accounts and I urge you to focus on supporting Texas's public schools, which serve 5.4 million students.

ESAs divert vital funding from public schools, worsen budget shortfalls, and increase disparities, particularly in low-income areas. Private schools funded by ESAs lack transparency and accountability, risking misuse of taxpayer money. ESAs primarily benefit wealthier families, leaving low-income, rural and disabled students in underfunded public schools. They also risk increasing segregation by allowing private schools to exclude marginalized groups including disability populations.

Please prioritize funding public education for the benefit of all Texas students.

Thank you.

Angela Ramirez
Self, stay-at-home parent
Cedar Park, TX

Thank you for considering an increase to the basic public school allotment, however an increase of \$220 does not come remotely close to meeting inflation since 2019! Given the \$24B budget surplus we currently have, and how far behind we are in funding the public schools that serve the MAJORITY of Texas students, I think it is reasonable to increase the allotment by much more than \$220. Texas lawmakers have neglected our public schools for far too long, it is time to take our children's education seriously and make up for it!

Heather Reck, Mrs
Self and public school kids. Project Manager
Fort Worth, TX

We need more money than a measly \$220 allotment for public school kids where ALL children are served and where testing and standards are collected. Charter schools are NOT what I agreed to be taxed to pay for. No more \$ for charter schools. None.

Carrol Johnson
Self
Magnolia, TX

I support HB 2. Both my brother, Donald Lee Johnson, and my brother-in-law, Leonard Milam Hedges, were decades long residents of Richmond and Brenham SLLC's, respectively. The SSLC's provide comprehensive care for the intellectually disabled that cannot be matched in the "community". The LIDDA'S have long declined to refer clients to the SSLC's unless they "failed" in community settings. For the medically fragile, that has meant death, in some cases.

Thanks for your consideration.

marta rozanich
Self
Ft worth, TX

Vote no on HB2. We need to fully fund our public schools. We have the money, our children deserve better. Our neighbor hoods depend on local schools. Rural communities don't have access to private schools. Fix our public school system, please don't dismantle it.

Heather Garcia

self

Arlington, TX

Subject: Support for HB 2 – Enhancing Public Education Funding in Texas

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 2 (HB 2), Representative Buckley’s proposed school finance bill, which seeks to invest over \$8 billion in new funding for public education in Texas. This bill represents a crucial step toward ensuring equitable and high-quality education for all students while addressing critical financial needs across our school districts.

Some of the most impactful provisions of HB 2 include:

Basic Allotment Increase: Raising the per-student basic allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,380, injecting \$3.2 billion into the system. This increase will provide much-needed financial stability to schools, allowing them to improve educational resources and student outcomes.

Staff Salary Increases: Ensuring that 40% (up from 30%) of any BA increase is dedicated to staff salary improvements will help attract and retain high-quality educators.

Support for Small and Midsized Districts: The \$1.1 billion increase to the small and midsized allotments will provide necessary relief to districts that often struggle with limited resources.

Special Education Funding: With \$1.8 billion directed toward intensity-based special education funding and additional allotments, as well as a \$1,000-per-initial-SPED evaluation allotment, this bill acknowledges the urgent need to support students with disabilities.

Expanded Grant Funding: Allocating \$1.5 billion for pre-K, fine arts, high school career advising, and other programs will enrich students' educational experiences and better prepare them for future success.

Teacher Incentive Allotment: Investing \$750 million to enhance teacher compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment will encourage excellence in teaching and help retain top educators.

Additional State Aid for Property & Casualty Insurance Costs: Addressing the rising costs of regional property and casualty insurance will provide financial relief to school districts and allow them to allocate resources more effectively.

HB 2 is a comprehensive bill that prioritizes students, educators, and schools by addressing the most pressing financial challenges in our education system. I urge you to support and advance this legislation to ensure Texas students receive the quality education they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to strengthening public education in Texas.

Sincerely,

Heather Garcia

Dawn Harris

Self

Dallas, TX

Please increase funding for special education

Lillian Porter

SELF-Retired Verizon Corporation/SAN ANGELO STATE SUPPORTED LIVING CENTER

San Angelo, TX

My name is Lillian K Porter, and I am mother and guardian of Robert Cody Porter. Robert Cody has been a resident of San Angelo State Supported Living Center for over 21 years.

His care, welfare, and training at SASSLC have been invaluable to our family. Robert Cody is mentally retarded, limited speech, some cerebral palsy, some autistic tendencies. His behavior has been very violent at times, since he was a small child. As he has matured, his behavior has caused our family many problems not only for his safety, but for the family's ability to function and to nurture him.

Prior to arriving at San Angelo State Supported Living Center 21 years ago, Robert Cody lived at home until he was 17 years old. He was placed in three different residential homes and facilities, and a one month stay at Big Spring State Hospital.

The residential placements were understaffed and unable to cope with his behaviors and refusals at each facility. The State Hospital stay occurred just prior to his admission to SASSLC.

As you can imagine, our journey has been difficult, but God has blessed and provided many special professional supports along the way. Especially at SASSLC, Robert Cody has been able to make wonderful progress in his behavior, attends workshops and activities much of the time. There are still times that his behavior is very difficult but progress is still being made for his social adjustment.

This lifelong journey to care for Robert Cody began in public school and group home environments but his difficult and dangerous behavior were unable to deal with his behavior, so it progressed to his admission to San Angelo State Supported Living Center when he was when he was 29 years old. He is now 50 years old. Without the care, training, and educational opportunities he has received progress would not have been possible without the resources of SASSLC. The direction for him and for our family have been invaluable for us as a family and private individual to obtain. The public school arena was of much value but as he aged out of public education services we would have been without resources for him. Therefore, public education recipients MUST have direction/access to State Supported Living Center availability to continue the help the welfare that these individuals and families MUST have. Individual families are just not equipped to navigate these continued lifelong and difficult needs. These dual diagnosed individuals have needs that cannot be accommodated in group homes or limited staff facilities. So many health-fragile or behavior-challenged individuals must have access to SSLCs that are equipped to help these fragile and vulnerable people that move from public school age to adult age.

Thank you for your help and consideration to help many families that are at our wits end to care for our loved ones

Respectfully,

Lillian K Porter, San Angelo Texas

Vahista Ussery

Self

Fort Worth, TX

\$229 is not nearly enough to ensure our children are successful in school. It's horrible that Texas invests so little in our future.

Also, charter schools do not need more money. Invest in our public schools!

Samantha Nielsen

Self

Austin, TX

Not in favor. Please don't support this bill

Suzanne Nuccitelli

self - coach

Austin, TX

I oppose vouchers and think that school funding should be separate from a voucher bill. Vouchers will further separate the quality of education divide as those who can afford or have an alternative near by will access the vouchers while those who cannot (due to geographic location, transportation issues, etc...) will remain in an underfunded public school. Why are my taxes going to support someone's ability to attend a private school that is not governed by the government (standardized testing, providing accommodations)? Public education money needs to stay in public education.

Logan Ellis

Self

Dallas, TX

Recommend raising the basic allotment by \$1,340.

Mark Neff, Mr

TRTA

Longview, TX

With increasing numbers of students with and without disabilities, it is important to fully fund these children. If you don't they will become wards of the state and the state will spend billions supporting these individuals. Please sir be responsible for the future of these individuals and for the future of Texas.

Rachel Feit

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Just a reminder that you work for the people of Texas- the people, not a subset of people. This is the public education committee because it is the duty of the republic of Texas to educate all its citizens the best way possible. This voucher system is not the solution, not the answer, not the way. Think again, please - surely there is a better way to support public education for all Texans.

Vanessa Zertuche

Self, parent, former PTO President and community volunteer in Coppell ISD
Irving, TX

I am a constituent in Coppell ISD in the DFW area - we have approx. 13K students. Thank you for considering additional funding for special education; my child formerly received SPED services. The \$615M increase in SPED is helpful as much of the SPED requirements are currently unfunded in our ISD. Please note that having the maximum amount capped annually may not provide the annual impact at the district level that is well-intended by the bill. Thank you also for considering the fine arts allotment - Coppell ISD places great value on fine arts programming and additional support is much appreciated. Finally, thank you for considering an increase to the basic allotment. However, as written, the \$220 increase to the BA is inadequate. Here are a few reasons why: 1. The basic allotment is the best mechanism to increase educator pay with the least bureaucracy. Yet, more attention is spent on expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment in this bill, which increases bureaucratic red tape and limits who can truly benefit. It appears only 6% of teachers currently qualify for the TIA, and some specialized educators are not considered due to the specialized nature of their role. An increase to the BA ensures districts have the means to provide raises to ALL educators. ALL EDUCATORS are impacted by inflation, so if changes are desired to the TIA, they should be considered as a separate issue from the basic allotment. In order for all educators to see a positive impact from this bill, you cannot operate under the assumption that with a larger infusion into TIA means we can get by with a lesser infusion into the basic allotment.

2. With only a \$220 increase being proposed to the BA, even if the bill's provision for 40% of any increase to be spent on pay increases stands, it still does not result in sufficient funding. Here is the math as it relates to Coppell ISD:

BA increase of \$220 per student x 13K CISD enrollment = \$2.86M

40% of that to teacher pay: \$88 per student x 13K = \$1.14M

60% of the increase is discretionary: \$132 x 13K = \$1.716M

Please note that a 3% pay raise for faculty and staff in our district costs \$2-3M per year. This is not enough for our district to address local needs adequately. As written, HB2 metes out funding within specified buckets, which overlooks the fact that our TX districts are varied and diverse in their needs. Districts should be given more local control over how they allocate their spending according to their needs. A larger increase to the BA would allow them to do this more effectively. Please consider a more impactful increase to the basic allotment - it would take \$1340 to bridge the gaps left by inflation since the last increase in 2019, so \$220 will not create a meaningful enough impact. Additionally, please consider adding an inflationary index into this bill to ensure funding keeps pace with future inflation. Thank you for the hard work. Please do right by our public schools and increase BA by more than \$220/student.

Alexis Willingham

self

PROSPER, TX

I am not in support for my tax dollars funding private schools. I do not support the school voucher programs.

Kay Campbell, Mrs

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please raise the basic allotment to at least \$1340 - to 2019 levels!

Nikki Roberts

Self and all public schools against vouchers

Claude, TX

We know these vouchers will probably pass but amendments need to be added. If you want to level the playing field as you have said this bill will do then level it! Hold private school to the same accountability as public schools. Give them the same A-F scores based off STAAR scores OR get rid of the STAAR and accountability ratings for public schools! There is nothing equal about your vouchers. Or better yet how about you send it to a vote across the state, let the people decide where they want their tax money going or are you afraid the people will say no to your voucher scam!

Lex-Anne Vogel

Self

Fort Worth, TX

No vouchers!!! No more funding to charter schools!!!

Ann Glenn

self/retired from working for the State of Texas

Austin, TX

An increase of funding by \$220 per student does not come close to addressing the shortfall created over the last six years. More than \$1000 per student would be needed to cover the shortfall.

Julia Goewey Ruiz

Self

Austin, TX

Dear all, Please increase the student allotment as close to (~\$1200) or MORE than inflation increases as possible, encouraging our children growth & teachers support. Ideally, and honestly at the minimum, student allotment should automatically change year over year based on inflation rates so there is no overall loss.

I support the expansion of PK3.

I support funding increases for Special Education, fine arts, high school career advising among other student support.

Thank you.

Peggy Keefe-Lopez

self, graphic designer & parent

Austin, TX

Please increase the per child allotment by \$1,000 to account for inflation. I appreciate the requirement for certified teachers and that 40% must be used on salary increases. But the BA is not enough at the moment. I have 2 kids in Round Rock ISD and another who will join them in a year. It's important to our family that their local school is adequately funded. Right now they have a teacher shortage—one class has been taught by rotating substitutes for this entire year. And that's the grade my daughter is going into next year. All of our kids deserve an adequate education from a consistent person with the right qualifications. I feel for the kids who haven't been able to build that rapport with a teacher who truly cares for them and has been with them all year.

Stephennie Mulder

Self, professor and parent of three children currently enrolled in Texas public schools

Austin, TX

I am writing to ask the committee to support the full funding of public education and specifically to endorse the proposal made by the Texas PTA to advocate for raising the basic per-child allotment by \$1340 to get back to 2019 levels adjusted for inflation.

Thank you.

Foster Ellis
Self/ Speech-Language Pathologist
Dallas, TX

Thank you for your service to the people of our state and I pray you will use your power of the purse wisely on behalf of our children.

Our public schools have been underfunded since 2011, when you balanced the state budget by cutting education funding by \$5.4 billion. Since almost 90% of the funds in that budget go directly to the people who support our children in the classrooms, that was a devastating blow to children in those classrooms that has not yet been remedied.

Your "record investment" in public education in 2019 didn't even get us back to 2009 levels, when you account for inflation. We haven't seen a significant increase in funding that didn't come with expensive mandates attached since then, despite a global pandemic and a couple of years of painful inflation that followed.

Our teachers are getting paid \$10k less than their peers in other states; our students are receiving funding that is, in some cases, a third of the resources the children they will competing against for jobs in the future currently receive in other states; and our counselor-to-student ratios are a fraction of what is recommended by health professionals. This is on you. You could change this.

It's raining. You have the umbrella. You could take your constitutional responsibility seriously and use that surplus, dipping into the rainy day fund if you need to, to get the money back into our schools that they deserve through an increase in the basic allotment, that, unlike a teacher stipend, would support ALL the professionals in our schools supporting our children.

Thank you for doing the right thing for the future of Texas and the children who are watching.

Amy Copps
self/retired nurse
Georgetown, TX

HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase is insulting; falling far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently, special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Emily Bryant
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote no to voucher program/SB 2. We need our public schools to be FULLY FUNDED!!!

Tanya Belk
Self
Pflugerville, TX

My name is Tanya Belk and I live at 18813 Pencil Cactus Dr., Pflugerville, TX 78660 and wanted to write to express my deep **OPPOSITION TO PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS**. We need to support our public schools and giving folks who already have enough money to send their kids to **PRIVATE** schools is deeply unfair. They do not need a voucher/coupon to do so. This is taking funds away from our public schools. Many of the counties in Texas don't even have private school options and therefore those kids would not even have access to this. Public schools provide every child with an opportunity to succeed and I am committed to supporting that with our tax dollars. Education is the great equalizer and it is our duty to create educated citizens that can serve not only our country, but the world, for all of our benefits.

Thank you for your consideration in considering my opposition to these private school vouchers.

Have a great day!

Chelsea Williams
Self
FORT WORTH, TX

If HB2 passes, public schools will suffer. An additional \$220 per student is simply not enough. Fully fund public education and let wealthy families pay their own way for private school. Public school teachers and administrators need our support, not our indifference. I urge all to vote **NO** to this bill.

Barbara Terry
self, attorney
Austin, TX

I object to such a minuscule increase in the basic allotment per student. Given the failure of the Legislature to adequately fund the districts during the last several sessions, the proposed student allotment increase will not be sufficient to bring the districts up to current cost standards. The basic allotment should be increased at the very least by \$1000 per student from where it currently is. Texas has the money! Spend it on our kids, who are the future of this state.

Tomas Rodríguez
Self
Austin, TX

I oppose HB2 using my taxes to favor private schools. Private schools **ARE NOT** part of our **TEXAS** constitution and will negatively affect rural Texas Schools and citizens.

Alexandria Linden

Self

Leander, TX

I am a high school Biology teacher at Leander High School in Leander ISD. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and am certified to mentor teachers who are pursuing National Board Certification. I appreciate that HB2 preserves the National Board Certification pathway to TIA designation.

I teach 9th grade biology, IB SL and HL1/HL2 college level Biology courses at LHS, have been a PLC Lead and I'm the current Science Department Chair.

The impact of National Board Certification on me, my students, and my colleagues is that it has strengthened my teaching. It has resulted in me becoming a more reflective teacher who is capable of meeting students where they are and supporting them to excel at all levels. I have seen my NBTC have a positive impact on student growth and student/family engagement. Students and families have more trust in my capabilities as a teacher knowing that I've been through the rigorous NBTC process & they were incredibly supportive during my time as a candidate.

National Board Certification is an important pathway for TIA designation because not all districts participate in TIA. From the mouth of Bruce Gearing, our Super Inten, he does not believe in rewarding teachers for test scores. It is proven that highly effective teachers are able to increase learning and therefore by default test scores. NBCT have a proven record of being highly effective. Since our district does not participate in TIA, the NBTC recognized designation is the only way that I'm able to be recognized and compensated for being a highly effective teacher in LISD. The allotment funding should be a retention mechanism so that good teachers who are in districts who do not support TIA remain in the profession. The increased allotment will allow districts retain excellent teachers in higher need schools and increased access to TIA when local designation systems are limited. There are fewer than .3% of teachers in Texas who are NBTC compared to the 3% of teachers nationwide; this is less than 1000. With out TIA funding, fewer teachers will seek out National Board Certification and teachers in Texas will fall behind when it comes to retaining and training highly effective teachers.

National Board Certification is a merit-based achievement that recognizes great teaching, and I urge you to preserve it as a pathway to a TIA recognized designation in HB2.

Jessica Ward

Midlothian ISD School Board Trustee

Midlothian, TX

Chairman Buckley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. While HB 3 increases the basic allotment, it fails to fully account for inflation since 2019. With ESSER funds ending, districts are forced to absorb rising costs without adequate state support. Midlothian ISD faces a \$3.9 million decline in state revenue from \$26.8 million in 2023-24 to \$22.8 million in 2024-25, despite a growing student population with greater needs.

Over the past four years, our special populations have increased significantly:

Economically Disadvantaged: 25.2% ? 32.4% (+7.2%)

Emergent Bilingual: 3.8% ? 5.6% (+1.8%)

Special Education: 12.8% ? 14.6% (+1.8%)

At-Risk: 32.2% ? 41.7% (+9.5%)

Despite these challenges, Midlothian ISD outperforms Region 10 and state averages on STAAR assessments, and our College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) rate is 83.4%. Our teachers and staff are among the best in Texas, yet we struggle to provide competitive pay. We are 4% below market for teacher salaries and are anticipating a \$6.1 million deficit in 2025-26 if funding remains unchanged.

Midlothian ISD offers a 10% homestead exemption—the only district in Ellis County to do so—costing us \$8 million annually. We want to maintain this relief for taxpayers, but without real state funding reform, it may have to be reconsidered.

Rising Costs & Budget Cuts

82.96% of our budget supports instruction and student services.

Operational costs are rising by \$1.46 million, including:

Property & Liability Insurance: +\$628,919

School Resource Officers (SROs): +\$423,900

Security, Utilities, Fuel, and Other Costs: +\$413,420

We have cut 17% of our operational budget and campus budgets by 10-15% annually.

Our transportation department drives 6,558 miles daily with 5,677 students, logging 1.1 million miles last year. We need new buses, yet funding remains stagnant. Our maintenance team saved \$48,100 in fuel costs and \$7,000 in tire re-treading, but efficiency has its limits—there's nothing left to cut without harming education quality.

Call to Action

Substantially increase the basic allotment to align with inflation and rising costs.

Address funding gaps for at-risk, bilingual, and special education students.

Provide transition funding to offset the loss of ESSER funds.

Ensure stable and predictable school funding.

Fix the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) so that all teachers can qualify for additional compensation.

Texas schools cannot survive on an additional \$220 per student. The 5.5 million students in Texas deserve more. Please do not let Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) distract from the urgent need for public school funding reform.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Respectfully submitted, Jessica Ward, Trustee Midlothian ISD

Natasha Weissmiller
Education Austin/ Teacher
San Marcos, TX

My name is Natasha Weissmiller. I live in San Marcos, TX and am a constituent of Rep. Erin Zwiener. I am a member of Education Austin and teach/work at Bowie High School in South Austin. I am opposed to HB2. The \$220 increase in the basic allotment per student is wholly insufficient, and the proposed "teacher pay raise" is nothing more than a smokescreen. Double the basic allotment to \$12,000 per student and index it, and give every single teacher with five or more years experience in Texas a salary that reflects the amount of work they do AND their qualifications as professionals.

Janet Sweezey
self - retired
Houston, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education, and adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools. In my school district (Clear Creek ISD), insufficient special education funds cause denied and/or significantly delayed evaluations, inadequate and/or incompetent staffing, lack of appropriate therapy services (ST, OT, and PT), and lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Shannon Washburn
self, veterinarian and professor
College Station, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed school voucher programs in Texas. As a concerned constituent, I believe that such programs would negatively impact the public education system and fail to provide the equity and quality our students deserve.

School vouchers divert public funding from already underfunded public schools, further exacerbating the challenges faced by teachers, students, and families. Public schools are the cornerstone of our education system, and they serve the majority of Texas children, regardless of their socioeconomic background or zip code. Instead of funneling money into private institutions, we should focus on strengthening and investing in public education, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to high-quality learning opportunities.

Moreover, school vouchers often lack the necessary accountability measures, leaving taxpayers vulnerable to funding programs with questionable standards. I believe that public funds should be used to support public institutions that serve the diverse needs of all students.

I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of supporting school vouchers and to prioritize policies that benefit all Texas students by investing in and improving our public schools. Please stand with me in opposing this misguided proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Shannon Washburn, DVM, PhD

Kevin Jackson
Self/Educational Diagnostician
Austin, TX

Hello. Thank you for your attention to the State of our Schools. I am a Texas dad who is very concerned with my children's education. Especially with the issue of low teacher salaries and the increase of uncertified teachers in the classroom.

I know my teachers are working hard and my district is financially responsible. I also know we have not seen a significant increase in student funding since 2019 and are still at 2014 real-dollar numbers, despite additional expensive mandates and double digit inflation. We have a \$24 billion surplus in the general revenue fund and another \$28 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.

I understand there are House and Senate bills that propose directly supporting teachers but I ask you to raise the basic allotment by \$1300, instead. This would give a much-needed and long-delayed \$10 billion dollars of investment in our children and their futures. We have the money. And if we don't, we need to understand why.

Raising the basic allotment gives our teachers the much-needed boost they deserve AND it gives districts the opportunity to support all the aides, librarians, counselors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and all the other people who are also struggling with lower-than-national-average wage amid funding that hasn't kept up with 2014 dollars. Our teachers and students deserve that additional support.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I will be paying attention relentlessly through this legislative session to ensure our schools get the funds they need to meet the needs of our children and all the people who support them before sine die on June 2, 2025.

Sincerely, a concerned Texas dad.

Jane Cook
self
Dallas, TX

Republicans have long run on the pretense of supporting public education, yet Texas schools have long been underfunded in one of the richest states in the country. Our rankings compared to other states shows this lack of funding. We are only as strong as our weakest link and, now is not the time to divert funds to charter and private schools who are not required to meet the same standards as public schools. Nor does it make sense to create more schools when we don't even have enough teachers to adequately staff our public schools. We need to strengthen our public schools to accommodate all our children. We, the taxpayers, should not have to subsidize private education for any child.

Lori Carnes
Haskell CISD
Haskell, TX

I am asking that you please increase public school funding(basic allotment). As a former paraprofessional, but also a parent of students in a public school, we need this increase instead of having it taken away.

Tamara Tribble, Ms.
IISD
Addison, TX

I am mortified by what's going on in this country. Please protect the poor. Please provide for those who cannot provide for themselves. Please ensure that impoverished students have good schools that are equipped to meet their needs. PLEASE! ????

Nettie Phares

Self

Flatonia, TX

Public teachers are a necessity in our country and anyone who says otherwise wants something from you. Case in point private schools wanting to end public schools so they can make more money just like every other rich billionaire who wants to privatize everything.

Education is a right that WE pay for as the people. I refuse to let the money we put into the Government towards our children get stolen by some selfish pricks who just want to watch their dollar signs go up again and again. When is enough enough? Pay our public teachers better, treat our schools better, only Trump and other abusers like him like our people dumb.

Nicole Harbison

Self

Longview, TX

I am thankful for a proposed increase in basic student allotment; however, \$220 per student falls woefully short of what our districts need. We are operating at a deficit budget and need more teachers. Of my 27 seats, fewer than ten are not broken, and we cannot afford to replace them.

I propose we increase the allotment by \$1000 each pupil. Allocate that same percentage toward teacher raises, of which we are in desperate need. My husband and I, both teachers, do what we do for the love of students; however, we have been having tough conversations about whether we can both continue as educators and meet our financial needs/goals. We should t have to have that conversation as a financially responsible family and dedicated public servants. Our coworkers are having similar discussions. If you want to keep great teacher, you need to make sure they can afford to stay in education. If we are saying the education savings program/voucher bill isn't meant to hurt public education, show us that by adequately funding public education.

Teressa Mackey

Self

Blanco, TX

Begging you to increase the standard allotment / student in the public school system! Increase teacher salary.

Vanessa Coronado

Tomball Memorial High School

Cypress, TX

I am extremely passionate about Texas preserving National Board Certification (NBC) as a TIA pathway. For many teachers, this is the ONLY way to participate in TIA and this certification is the highest level of training a teacher can get. TX is currently very far behind in the national stage, ranked 42nd in the country, this would hinder progress. As a 21-year Texas educator, I can confidently say that NB certification represents the single most impactful professional development and educational achievement any teacher can go through. This multi-year process is extremely reflective and insightful into my own teaching practices and took up to 400 hours of hard work to achieve. Between documentation, video analysis, data collection, and the deep dive in to accomplished teaching practices, this process helped shape me as an educator for the remaining years of my service. With 100% certainty, I would NOT have attempted to achieve this certification had there not been an incentive to do so. My teaching is at a much more impactful level having done this certification as are those of my colleagues and cohort members who have also achieved. PLEASE choose to preserve NBC as a TIA pathway, benefiting the quality and quantity of Texas teachers at this high level.

Benjamin Dubberly

self--teacher

Lubbock, TX

I never expected to get rich teaching. I don't even expect to be actual middle class. All I want is to be able to repair my 22-year-old car so I can get to work.

Hearing Date: March 4, 2025 8:00 AM

JAMES GALLAGHER

self

JONESTOWN, TX

Funding should be enrollment-based, not attendance-based, since schools must fund staff, facilities, etc. for total enrollment, no matter how many students show up.

The \$200 increase in the basic allotment is laughable, because the allotment hasn't been increased since 2019. Inflation alone warrants a \$1300 increase.

The allotment should be increased automatically year-to-year based on inflation.

Any mandates, such as school safety requirements, special education, tech education, career preparation, should be fully funded by the state.

Teacher incentive compensation is far too complicated and too dependent on test scores which don't accurately measure student performance. Instead increase the planned raises for teachers and support staff across the board in order to retain and recruit public school personnel.

Laura Daulton

Self, writer, substitute teacher, small business owner

Abilene, TX

Each public school student needs more money allotted to their education to at least keep up with inflation and at most make Texas comparable to other states.

Nicholas Stephenson

Self

Melissa, TX

I speak out today against school vouchers. I am a proud band director who has give 21 years of service to this state. I take pride in being a Texas educator and especially a Texas music educator as I know our band programs are amongst some of the best in the nation. I have seen public schools transform lives of students who take part in the programs I have been part of. I have had the pleasure of teaching rural communities in West Texas and North Texas most of my career. Our schools provide opportunities for our students to succeed and grow. Without them many would not survive the competitive nature of our economy and would not grow to be productive citizens. I hasten to support vouchers as private schools are scarce throughout the state and have tuition demands that are rarely accomodale to the average citizen. These vouchers WILL take away money from our public schools no matter what any policitian tries to tell us. Therefore, it will rob our rural schools in this state and make it to where many will have to close their doors and cause people to either home school or drive (in some cases) hours to get to their school. This is not acceptable. A student in Muleshoe, TX deserves a public education. A student in Dallas, TX also deserves a public education. The student in Dallas will have a huge advantage even if it's public school closes as they are at least close to private schools. The students in rural communities will be "left behind." Our small towns in Texas are the bedrock from which our state has been built. These small communities make sure we have food on the table and clothes on our back and have recently helped us have power in our homes. I fear that the further death of these small communities will lead to a weaker and more vulnerable state. By what measure of civility do we think it is right to take away public schools from our rural communities? How is this right? Also, we have well established public schools in urban areas of our state. These communities depend on their local schools. Many have seen their neighborhood school shuttered because of the attack on public education that our state house and senate have been engaging in over the last decade and especially today. What good do we thing an uneducated populus will do to our society as we know it? For that kid who would have never dreamed of being a doctor because of the financial cost to attend private schools, how do you justify robbing this student of their education. We have major shortages in all career paths in this nation that require advanced/collegiate training. What are we going to do to make sure we have enough doctors, lawyers, nurses, etc? How will we know about these students if they are never identified in a public school setting? I make a decent living (not great) here in Texas and there's no way I can afford to send my children to private schools? How are people who have no degree going to educate their children? I fear for our future!! Please support PUBLIC ED!!

Joan Carney

self

Lago Vista, TX

I'm a former fifth grade teacher and strongly support public schools.

I urge that HB 2 be amended as follows:

Funding should be enrollment-based, not attendance-based, since schools must fund staff, facilities, etc. for total enrollment, no matter how many students show up.

The \$200 increase in the basic allotment is laughable, because the allotment hasn't been increased since 2019. Inflation alone warrants a \$1300 increase.

The allotment should be increased automatically year-to-year based on inflation.

Any mandates, such as school safety requirements, special education, tech education, career preparation, should be fully funded by the state.

Teacher incentive compensation is far too complicated and too dependent on test scores which don't accurately measure student performance. Instead increase the planned raises for teachers and support staff across the board in order to retain and recruit public school personnel.

Becky Anderson

Self

Amarillo, TX

You all keep pushing this when no one wants it! Very disappointing!

Timothy Green

self

New Braunfels, TX

Public Testimony on HB 2

Honorable Representatives:

As a parent of two public school children and a public school teacher, I am opposed to HB 2 and the voucher program proposed for the following compelling reasons:

****Fiscal Impact****: Texas ranks 29th nationally in per-student investment, while our neighbor New Mexico ranks 4th. HB 2 would take even more money away from our already underfunded schools. Vouchers benefit upper-income families who can already afford private school, providing them with a taxpayer subsidy while most Texas children attend under-resourced public schools.

****Democratic Accountability****: Public school curriculum is created openly through the State Board of Education and TEA with elected members representing the interests of voters. Private schools do not have this democratic accountability, and they teach whatever curriculum they wish. Diverting public money to schools that do not have public accountability undermines a basic democratic principle: no taxation without representation.

****False Choice****: The voucher amount is far below private school tuition, so it is not helpful to poor families. There are few or no private schools in most rural areas, so those districts lose tax revenue with no benefit. Private schools can reject students with disabilities or behavioral issues, so a two-tiered system will exist where public schools must accept all students but private schools accept only the easiest students.

****Students with Disabilities****: Public schools must accommodate students with disabilities under federal law. Private schools do not have to, and these vulnerable students would be left behind.

I urge you to vote no on HB 2 and instead look to fully funding the public schools that serve 90% of Texas children. The future of our state depends on a robust system of public education that serves all Texans.

Sincerely,

Timothy W. Green

Public School Teacher and Parent

Tara GUTHRIE
self, substitute teacher
Fredericksburg, TX

Here are just a few of the countless reasons I have grave concerns about vouchers passing in Texas:

1 – Vouchers are expensive. We simply can't afford to fund three types of school systems (traditional ISDs, charter schools, and private schools funded by vouchers) that follow three different sets of rules. The state has already chosen to spend billions of taxpayer dollars each year on charter schools. That money comes directly out of neighborhood public schools. Funding a third system will no doubt significantly weaken local community schools and existing charters. Texas is already near the bottom in the country in public school funding.

2 - Private Schools and Homeschools deserve independence from the state -- This is key for maintaining our 'choice' of curriculum for our children. Contrary to the opponents who worry that vouchers will undermine the public schools, I fear they will undermine—level—the private ones. Follow the money - whoever controls the money controls the curriculum. No choice in curriculum takes away our freedom to choose an alternate learning track.

3 Rural students lose - Many municipalities in Texas lack private school options that are accessible within driving distance.

Anika Keswani
self
AUSTIN, TX

The Texas public education system isn't even 200 years old, and here we are trying to dismantle it. Just a few blocks from the Capitol, stands a plaque at the (former) German Free School, which was then established to REPLACE the private, and /or primarily religion-based instruction that students in this state had access to at the time, with school that was open to all. In fact, the German immigrants who established MUCH of central Texas believed (as I and many many parents do) that education is a basic right we must all have access to, in order to ensure our children & the next generation can be successful. Vouchers demolish all of this.

We simply cannot do this to our school system. It will drive away educated families, and leave Texas children performing even worse than they already are in the nation, in comparison to other states.

Are we TRYING to be dead last? If so, this is certainly the way to go. Vote no on this terrible, terrible bill. Or at the very least, watch how badly it goes for the lower-ranked Tennessee public school system first, and then decide. Don't let Texas children be guinea pigs for absolutely terrible policy.

Anthony Elmo
Retired
Fort Worth, TX

This is a charter school giveaway bill and they dont need facilities funding. They should re-route their profits back into facilities. And the basic allotment needs to go up at least \$1340.00 not 200.00. Way too low. And stop your vouchers nonsense.

Teresa Russell

Gause ISD

Gause, TX

The Impact Recapture Has on a Small Rural School District

In Texas, the issue of recapture funds has become an ongoing source of debate from the state level down to local school board meetings. Recapture started as a program to help school districts with lower property wealth achieve fairer funding through the redistribution of local tax revenue from property-wealthy school districts. Over time, however, the program has grown in size and now collects more than \$4.5 billion from a broader swath of districts than was originally intended.

Gause ISD is a perfect example of a district that has been caught up in the recapture system—making it harder for us to educate our own students after sending almost half of our local tax revenue back to the state through recapture. We are a community of 130 students in prekindergarten through 8th grade who are 76.9% economically disadvantaged, yet the state takes back just over \$1 million of the \$2.1 million our local taxpayers contribute to support their local public school.

As a result, our school board has had to pass a deficit budget to give our teachers and staff moderate raises, and we proposed—and our community approved—a \$3 million bond issue to pay for the construction of a multipurpose facility that we could have otherwise have attempted to address through other means. We did not raise our tax rate to address teacher salaries because we have burdened our taxpayers enough with the passage of a bond—a first for our farm and ranch community of 275 residents.

Our financial situation might be more manageable if the state would increase its support of public schools. Instead, we have not seen an increase to the basic allotment since 2019 while inflation has jumped by almost 20% since then—eating away at our buying power even though it looks like we have the same overall revenue available. Further, the use of average daily attendance in calculating our school funding is hurting our school, as absenteeism does not affect operational costs. The state should consider funding schools based on enrollment because we need to keep teachers employed whether a student is there 100% of the time or 75% of the time.

The current school finance system penalizes districts for running a tight ship and being good stewards of taxpayer funds. That is wrong, and it's time for the Texas Legislature to prioritize public school students and to strike a balance between helping districts with lower property wealth and allowing recapture districts to adequately serve our communities. Fixing the recapture system would better serve all districts, ensuring that every student has the resources they need to succeed without penalizing communities.

Mary Powell, Dr.

Self

Abilene, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. It will have devastating impact on the most vulnerable children and families in our state. It “sounds” like a good idea to everyone choice but in reality you will shifting funds from underserved areas to areas where there are already many choices. Do the right thing for all of the students in our state. Kill the bill.

Wendi Searcy, HB2&3

Self

Amarillo, TX

Texans are not for this!!!! Our public schools are barely hanging on as it is. We need funding for our schools!!!!

Marissa Stewart

self

Hutto, TX

I am demanding the committee increase teacher pay across the board. The Texas Incentive Allotment does not give raises to all teachers and Texas currently ranks 30th in average teacher pay. Texas is also experiencing an inability to employ enough qualified teachers to fill open positions. To be competitive, and get the best for our students and communities, the Legislature should include pay raises ALL teachers benefit from, not just ones based on test scores that are only eligible for teachers in tested subjects. Please give teachers the pay they deserve for the hard work they do!

Mandi Browning

Self/Public School Teacher

Amarillo, TX

This bill is not beneficial to the majority of students in Texas Public Schools. Most students in private schools can already afford those tuitions or are given scholarships. Private schools do not have to provide special education accommodations, free and reduced meals, and transportation. Educators do not have to be state certified at private schools. This bill will hurt the majority of Texas Public Schools and the students who go there. School finance in Texas is already a mess and has been for years. I know this as a taxpayer, an educator, and a former school board member. This bill is not the way to alleviate the problem. Please listen to the Texas parents, educators, and taxpayers. Thank you.

Lindsey Ramirez

Self

Austin, TX

The proposed increase in the basic allotment is woefully inadequate. School finance experts believe an increase of at least \$1,000 is necessary to meet inflationary costs alone.

Please increase the basic allotment and move from an attendance-based to an enrollment-based system. Thank you

Jami Cowart

Self

Canyon, TX

Please do not pass this bill. Students in Texas need MORE funding, not less. Not one state has successfully implemented vouchers and studies have shown that the majority of students who use vouchers are already in public school. Please scrap this bill and put more money into Texas public schools. Over 70% of Texans agree.

Charlotte Davis

Self

Hurst, TX

Please vote "No!" Regarding HB2. Tax monies collected from the public belong to public schools not private. Please do not sanction misuse of public funds!

Bryan Armes
Self
Lubbock, TX

I am a Texan, and I strongly urge you to oppose any efforts to divert public funds to private school voucher programs. Our neighborhood public schools are the backbone of our communities, and they need to be fully and adequately funded to ensure every child receives a quality education.

Instead of funneling taxpayer dollars into private institutions with little accountability, we should invest in our public schools—raising teacher pay, reducing class sizes, and ensuring that all students, regardless of background or zip code, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

I ask you to stand with Texas families and prioritize public education by voting against any voucher schemes and supporting increased funding for our public schools.

Thank you for your time and service.

Terry Waldrep, Mr.
Pittsburg ISD
Pittsburg, TX

Please consider making the hold harmless on the homestead exemption to include all previous bonds passed, several districts have been asking for help concerning the new Homestead exemption and the hold harmless from SB4. I realize SB4 does have a hold harmless, but the current wording does not include bonds (Like ours) that were passed in May 2024. We ask that the wording be changed to include all bonds that have been passed. This will create a very difficult financial impact on our I&S tax revenue that could result in us not being able to give our tax payers the property tax relief. Also, this doesn't make sense to not hold us harmless after the fact. I realize they have done this before, but it was with smaller homestead increases from 15,000 to 25,000 and then to 40,000. Those increases were not 40,000 and 50,000 which they are proposing now. We are sending letters to our representatives and ask that others help us to get this wording changed.

Thanks again for all you do,

Lindsey McCrary

Self

BUSHLAND, TX

Rep. Buckley, I am a 4th generation Texan. My family, including both of my school-aged daughters and niece, attended public schools. Three generations of women before me were public educators. I have great respect for the public education school system. I cannot emphasize this enough - the school voucher program will not benefit current communities and students.

The voucher campaign claims that "school choice" will be widely available to any student across the state. This is simply and factually inaccurate. There are numerous rural areas where a private school is not accessible. I currently live near a city of almost 200,000 people, and there are two private schools here. Two. To my knowledge, they are the only private schools in the surrounding 26 county area.

Access is just one of the many deeply disturbing problems with this program. School vouchers will be taking necessary funding from the public education system. The local tax base cannot replace the hundreds of thousand, and sometimes millions, of dollars needed for funding. The middle class is being squeezed from every side, and we do not want our tax dollars used to fund the upper class.

I have two girls, both of whom need IEPs. Even if I wanted them to go to private schools, they would either not be accepted, or their disabilities would not be accommodated. I need the public school system to give my girls the best chance of learning and development so that they can become productive, tax paying citizens.

Rep. Buckley, you and your colleagues are elected officials. As an elected official, your most fundamental job is to represent the people of the state. The people at large, not a handful of deep pocketed donors. This is not about your career; this is about the education of Texas students. I urge you and your colleagues to listen to your constituents. We do not want the school voucher program.

Respectfully,

Lindsey McCrary, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Erin Brandstatt

Self

Amarillo, TX

Texas Public school deserve more money per student and personal deserve raises to keep up with inflation and insurance.

Allison Hanschen

Self, Speech-Language Pathologist

Austin, TX

As a long term resident in Austin, TX and mom of 2 in Austin ISD public elementary school, I'd like to discourage the vote for HB2. As a speech therapist I am intimately aware of children receiving education services which are unequivocally provided in public schools—they are not guaranteed in charter/private schools.

We already have school choice—my kids both attend a neighboring zoned public AISD school. The bill will not enhance this option.

Public school teachers are currently underpaid and under-supported as is. We do not have the funding to support HB2. Please do not reallocate funds away from public schools.

Thank you.

Kali Hodridge, Ms.

Self

Lubbock, TX

I OPPOSE vouchers and SUPPORT adequately funding our neighborhood public schools!

Alexcia Garcia

self

Brookshire, TX

HB 2, the House school finance bill, would raise the basic per-student funding allotment, which hasn't been increased since 2019, from \$6,160 to \$6,380 and require that 40 percent of that be used for school employee compensation, teachers and other professional employees as well as support staff. That portion currently is 30 percent. The proposed increase in the basic allotment is woefully inadequate. School finance experts believe an increase of at least \$1,000 is necessary to meet inflationary costs alone.

Paul & Carole Haupt

YISD Retired

79935, El Paso, TX, TX

Defeat public dollars for education from going to private schools.

Jessica Jicha

Self

Amarillo, TX

The majority of Texans do NOT support vouchers. Stop ignoring your constituents. Texans want smaller state government and investments in public schools for those who cannot go the private school route. Stop destroying our state.

Florence Gray

self /retired

Argyle, TX

I do not support school vouchers. I support public schools. As someone who has spent many many hours volunteering in public schools, I can't believe that you would destroy such an institution. Our beloved teachers deserve so much more. I will be watching and taking note of who votes against public schools.

Courtney Garrett
self, Librarian/GT Teacher
Plainview, TX

Respected Member of the House of Representatives,

You may not directly represent me because I am not located in your geographic district. But I have been involved in public schools since I began kindergarten, graduating from a public high school, attending a public university, and teaching in public schools right after college for the last 25 years. Since the Texas Constitution states “it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools”, then indirectly your duty is to me and for me.

Individually you may only represent a small section of Texas.
But your collective duty is to ALL of Texas.

If you are a member of the Public Education Committee, you heard TEA Commissioner Mike Morath’s testimony at the Public Education Committee meeting on February 25, 2025 where he presented the following handout:
<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/89R/handouts/C4002025022510001/f8e1a795-659d-43d9-8290-86a303367463.PDF>

According to slide 3 of the handout, Texas families have the “Current Learning Options” which could be synonymously rephrased at “Existing School Choice”:

Public Charter Schools: 422,930
Virtual and Hybrid Schools: 51,904
Private Schools: 286,624
Homeschool: 494,251

1,255,709 students are in charter, private, homeschool, or online.
230,858 more students are transfers to another public school district.
In other words, they are “not trapped by their zip code.”

1,486,567 students are already taking advantage of school choice without the use of my taxpayer dollars.

If you are a member of the Appropriations Committee, you also heard Commissioner Morath testify to you that funding for Special Education has a deficit of \$1.7 BILLION dollars (slide 20).

Public schools that have to pay \$1,000-\$5,000 to perform an evaluation should be reimbursed for every evaluation performed. Furthermore, public schools should not have to pay for the evaluation of students in private schools (slide 22).

In the 2023-24 school year, there were 775,318 students served through Special Education (slide 19). Even if all 100,000 vouchers went to students with special needs, that still only accounts for 12% of those students. Where are the efforts to support 100% of the students with special needs?

To the 75 of you that have coauthored HB3, I am extremely disappointed with your alignment to this school choice propaganda. I am disappointed in your blatant disregard of the correspondence of your constituents. I am disappointed that you have allowed Governor Abbott to intimidate you into following his personal agenda.

If the proponents of school choice TRULY want to help the low income and special needs students of Texas, then the much better and more common sense use of the proposed \$1 BILLION for vouchers in SB2 and HB3 would be to appropriate those PUBLIC funds to help offset the \$1.7 BILLION dollar Special Education deficit. TO BE CONTINUED

Courtney Garrett
self, Librarian/GT Teacher
Plainview, TX

If the proponents of school choice TRULY want to help the low income and special needs students of Texas, then why does HB3 specifically state on page 25, lines 9-25:

Sec. A 29.367. SPECIAL EDUCATION NOTICE. (a) A certified educational assistance organization shall post on the organization's Internet website and provide to each parent who submits an application for the program a notice that: 1) states that a private school is not subject to federal and state laws regarding the provision of educational services to a child with a disability in the same manner as a public school; and 2) provides information regarding rights to which a child with a disability is entitled under federal and state law if the child attends a public school, including: A) rights provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Section 1400 et seq.); and B) rights provided under Subchapter A. (b) private school in which a child with a disability who is a participating child enrolls shall provide to the participating parent a copy of the notice required under Subsection (a). Private schools do not have to admit students who need special education services, nor provide special education services to any students they do admit.

So how would a voucher to attend a private school be of any benefit to special needs students?

If the proponents of school choice TRULY want to help low income and special needs students of Texas, then 100% of the vouchers should go to students who are not currently attending a private school. The data from several states with school choice programs shows that approximately 75% or more of issued vouchers go to students already attending a private school. I believe there are two main reasons for this. 1. Low income students cannot make up the financial difference between the voucher and the tuition. They do not end up accepting the voucher, which leaves more available for other students. 2. Private schools are more than happy to retain students that are already admitted. Please do your due diligence in researching the results of school choice programs in other states and who the actual beneficiaries are.

<https://www.ncpecoalition.org/voucher-recipients>

If the proponents of school choice TRULY want to help low income and special needs students of Texas, then they would visit those students in public schools and invite Governor Abbott to attend as well. Visit after visit by Governor Abbott to private schools - where hundreds of thousands of students already have school choice without the use of my taxpayer dollars - does absolutely nothing to promote the false narrative that this is for "every" student. The people of Texas see straight through the façade of who Governor Abbott is trying to cater to, and it is far from the low income and special needs students.

The narrative that the majority of vouchers are for low income and special needs students to attend a private school is misleading at best and hypocritical at worst. CONTINUE

Courtney Garrett
self, Librarian/GT Teacher
Plainview, TX

Texans are tired of hearing that the “overwhelming majority” of us support school choice, based on the following YouGov survey by the University of Houston and the proposition from the November 2024 election that was poorly worded and again, misleading.

The YouGov survey only included 2,257 participants, which is far from a reliable sample size. There are numerous high schools that have more people than that.

<https://uh.edu/hobby/txtrends/education.pdf>

While it may show, although unreliably, support for vouchers, it also shows:

66% of Texans agree (31% strongly) with the anti-voucher/ESA argument that vouchers/ESAs funnel money away from already struggling public schools.

63% of Texans agree (28% strongly) with the anti-voucher/ESA argument that vouchers/ESAs provide funding to private schools and individuals with only limited accountability for how the funds are used.

62% of Texans agree (29% strongly) with the anti-voucher/ESA argument vouchers/ESAs fail to accommodate disabled and special needs students, who public schools are required to accept while private schools are not.

55% of Texans agree (27% strongly) with the anti-voucher/ESA argument that voucher/ESA’s use of tax dollars to subsidize religious schools violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

<https://texasgop.org/republican-primary-ballot-proposition/>

11.) Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student.

I would encourage you to pose this question to the constituents in your respective districts and gauge the true stance regarding school choice:

“Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public, private, charter, homeschool, or online, for their children, and they should be responsible for the costs associated with each type of school.”

Or you could simply have your staff track the reactions and comments to every one of your own or Governor Abbott’s social media posts regarding the issue. Several of your offices that I have spoken to on the phone have told me (paraphrasing) that they have received “a lot” of correspondence regarding school choice and that “most” or the “majority” has been opposed to school choice.

Prior to this proposition on the November 2024 ballot, members were already receiving “a lot” of correspondence regarding school choice. Below are The House of Representatives Compilation of Public Comments Submitted to the Committee on Public Education For Hearing Date: Monday, August 12, 2024 9:00 AM (that was) Compiled on: August 12, 2024 9:33 PM on both the topic of HB 1605 that addressed High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and Educational Opportunity.

Comments on HB 1605 (HQIM): 85 pages, 339 comments

<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/publiccomments/Meetings/C4002024081209001/InputItems/75c98f31-6b17-4571-9f1e-13e244d1a3ea.pdf#navpanes=0>

TO BE CONTINUED

Courtney Garrett
self, Librarian/GT Teacher
Plainview, TX

Comments on Educational Opportunity: 198 pages, 606 comments
<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/publiccomments/Meetings/C4002024081209001/InputItems/361d8e32-e055-4dd8-ad92-535106f1e431.pdf#navpanes=0>

A total of 2,257 survey participants in July 2024.

A total of 945 unsolicited comments in August 2024.

Texans were proactively expressing their concerns about vouchers and school choice long before the November election.

I am grateful that Teacher Salaries is also an emergency item this session. However, I hold my breath to see if it will once again be used a bargaining chip to pass vouchers. My state base has not increased since 2020-2021, since the minimum salary schedule tops out at step 20.

I highly encourage you to:

1. Extend the minimum salary schedule to step 30. Our most experienced teachers who have given over 20 years of their lives to the profession that creates all others should be rewarded for their longevity and endurance.
2. Increase the amount between every step of the minimum salary schedule to at least \$1,000-\$1,500. This will help account for the increase in insurance premiums, etc.
3. Not just focus on the increase in TIA (Teacher Incentive Allotment), but also for all of the other school personnel – Counselors, Arts Teachers, Librarians, STEM Teachers, AND Paraprofessionals – that contribute to the educational process.

This is not the first year that my net pay is less than it was the previous year.

My yearly gross is the same as last year.

My monthly gross is the same as last year.

My insurance costs and deductions are HIGHER than last year.

My net pay is LOWER than last year.

I am 48 years old. I have known since I was in high school that I wanted to be an educator. More than half of my life has been dedicated to loving and serving the children of Texas. I consider it the highest of honors to be called “teacher”. I have served as a cooperating teacher for future educators. I have been assigned as a mentor teacher for younger educators on my campus. I currently serve on our campus Leadership Team and have had several other duties and responsibilities added this year...and I make less money. It is no wonder that teachers are leaving the profession in droves.

The salaries for our paraprofessionals also need to be addressed. They offer so much support to our teachers and students. While there is a difference in the responsibilities compared to that of a certified teacher, they still work the same number of school days and hours. My daughter is in her first year and is the full time paraprofessional in our Pre-K classroom. Her salary is just over \$100 above the poverty level.

TO BE CONTINUED

Donna Beto
Self-retired teacher
Bryan, TX

I am a retired teacher in public education for 36 years and I am asking you to listen to teachers rather than Governor Abbott. Texas public schools continue to be underfunded and need the legislature to increase the per-student Basic Allotment by a \$1000, at least, and not a couple of hundred for each student. Use the \$20 billion surplus and the \$23 billion in the Rainy Day Fund for this and long-overdue salary increases for all teachers. I say 'No' to diverting this money to private businesses, which are private schools. Listen to your constituents-most Texans want continued funding for their local schools and not to subsidize private schools.

Respectfully,
Mrs. Beto

Courtney Garrett
self, Librarian/GT Teacher
Plainview, TX

On a personal note, I was honored to be received in Governor Abbott's office in 2019 with our 37-0 State Champion Girls' Basketball team from Mt. Pleasant Chapel Hill High School. Seeing my husband, the Head Coach, put a gold medal around Governor Abbott's neck was a moving moment. At that time, Governor Abbott seemed proud of our team's accomplishment and was more than happy to pose with us for pictures. In addition to my husband and I, three of the ten players that were present are also now working in public education. A fourth is working on her Masters degree in education.

Since that time, Governor Abbott has done nothing to support the Legislature in their Constitutional duty to improve public education in Texas.

The basic allotment has not increased. We are at the bottom in the nation in per student funding.

The state minimum salary schedule has not increased. We are at the bottom of the nation in teacher salary.

Contracts for testing companies have ballooned, with minimal improvement in test scores.

Teachers have left the profession in droves, so much so that he directed TEA to form a Teacher Vacancy Task Force to find out why. It doesn't take much to figure out that when workloads increase and support and compensation decrease, you will have people choose to go do something else.

The choice is now yours in this Legislative session.

Who will ultimately choose to listen to, your constituents that you are elected to represent or the \$6 million dollars from Pennsylvanian Jeff Yass that is being used to bully and threaten you out of a seat in the House in the next election if you don't support school choice?

Who will you ultimately choose to be loyal to, Section 1 of Article 7 of Constitution of the State of Texas that states "it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools" or a Governor who has increasingly attacked and undermined the 5.5 million public education students and 400,000 public educators over the last six years?

Your choices this session will determine our choices in the next elections.

Thank you to those of you who are standing up to Governor Abbott and remain steadfast to protect taxpayer money and fully fund public schools. Please continue to fight the good fight.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the great state of Texas. You will continue to be in my prayers as you make difficult decisions regarding the issue of school choice. I am open and willing to answer any questions about my 25 years of experience in public education.

Kristi Sterling, Ms.
NEA/TSTA/LEA
Lubbock, TX

To Mr. Speaker, the members of the Texas Senate, and the members of the House:

I want to address every single member that makes up our Texas Legislature. I want you to stop for a second and reflect on a teacher that either inspired you or made a lasting impression on you. Now I want you to ask yourself this question, do you believe that the teacher that came to your mind, deserves to work at a fully funded school with a livable wage? I have been in public education for 20 years. I was a Pre-kindergarten paraprofessional for 14 years and I am currently on year 6 of being a Pre-Kindergarten Teacher. I have worked at nothing but title I schools since being an employee for the school district that has been a big part of my educational career. Pre-K is blessed to have funding outside of the public-school funding through Head Start but that issue is at stake. Besides the Head Start funding, the fact that you all have had educators, admin, and district leaders on pins and needles WAITING to see if we would ever get funding or if we would ever get raises and because no one could agree on anything, we were put on a back burner. Due to the fact that public schools were put on the back burner to continue to boil and fester, what do we have now? Districts in deficits who now have to cut jobs, juggle teachers with the possibility of higher class sizes, teachers leaving the profession because of uncertainty, disrespect, lack of support, and living pay check to pay check. At some point in your term or terms for the position that you have or have held, you have said this statement: "I am going to put public education and teachers FIRST." What happened? The times of saying what we want to hear to get our vote is over. It's time for you to mean what you say and say what you mean! All teachers deserve a 10,000 pay raise. Support staff deserve a livable wage! I understand that bridging the gap between rural and urban salaries is important but the cost of living is very different, along with the workloads, expectations of teachers, plus the behaviors that are seen in urban districts. Now to discuss school vouchers, I urge every single member to say "NO" and here is why. School vouchers will not fix the real problems in education. Vouchers are all about school choice, right? You claim that parents should have a choice but what happens when they get the voucher but then have to come up with the rest of the money? What happens at a private school when students who come to them have a behavior problem, attendance problem, etc? The parents who have a "choice" will be right back in a public school with bigger class size due to cutting positions, outdated materials, and programs like art, music, ag stem and extra-curricular activities will be non-existent due to the lack of funding. Vouchers do not level the playing field! Teachers level the playing field and foster student learning and growth! Public schools matter! Public school teachers and students matter! Thank you.

Terri Romano
TR Marketing
HOUSTON, TX

SIR 12 is a proposed constitutional amendment that enshrines the right of parents to direct their children's education. I agree with this amendment. Also there has been a bill filed, SB 371, to make human sexuality instruction in public schools opt-in. I totally support this as well. These 2 bills and HB 2 and HB 3 compliment each other and foster a cooperative education system.

Travis Tidmore, Esquire
Self-Attorney
Amarillo, TX

You have heard from the people of this state and we are vehemently against this bill. Yet you continue to move forward with a bill that will dismantle the public education system. You continue to advance your own agendas because it enriches you, while the rest of us struggle. We know your agenda, defund public school so the general population stays stupid so you can control them. Meanwhile your private schools can refuse students of color, non-cis-gendered students, and anyone you don't like. Every single one of you that is even considering voting for this hill should be ashamed of yourselves. We are at a turning point in history, you can either continue the path you are on, or you can course adjust and stand against the fascism that is rising in this country and fight to save this democracy. Do you jobs and vote against this bill, it's what your constituents want.

Carrie Hubbard

Self

Amarillo, TX

As a Texas taxpayer, I am fervently against school vouchers. It is incredibly damaging to take money from public schools, who accept every child and have endless requirements and accountability standards. Private schools don't accept every child and have none of the accountability. This is wrong!! I will be remembering which civil servants ignored the protestations of the people and vote for vouchers anyway. They will never get my vote again.

Terrance Romano

TR Marketing

HOUSTON, TX

I support passage of HB 2, HB 3 and the parental rights bills. They complement one another and foster a cooperative education system. When the government supports parents in making the best decisions for their children, all students benefit. Thank you

Julie Allen, Counselor

Self

Arp, TX

We do NOT want vouchers. I work in a rural school and my students need all the funding we have plus the rest that Gov Abbott has held hostage. NO VOUCHERS!!

Megan Lawrence

ACPTA

AUSTIN, TX

I am writing to urge this committee to substantially increase the allotment for public schools and increase teacher salaries. We need to overcome the lack of increased funding in recent legislative sessions as well as the impact of inflation and reduced federal funding since the pandemic. The amount proposed will only get us to status quo which is woefully inadequate. Public education should be seen as an investment in the future of our state. It creates the foundational skill building for adults who can contribute positively to our economy as earners and spenders; it feeds the funnel for our stellar higher education institutions; education is proven to reduce crime and encourage healthier lifestyles which lead to safer communities. A strong education system builds a strong Texas which is the kind of ROI we all want.

Wesley Young

Self - Physical Therapist

Amarillo, TX

As a resident born and raised in Texas, I am truly concerned with the School Choice/Voucher System proposed by HB 2 and HB 3. So many people oppose these bills. I strongly feel that on previous elections there was a yes/no question about money following the student. I do not think people fully understood what it was asking and the wording was not suggestive of a voucher system. I know it confused me. I think that may or may not been done on purpose. I think we need to take this issue to the people to vote on. I've seen other States that have done this system and they are showing it is taking money away from Public Schools. I truly do not see how \$1 billion helping 100,000 out of over not quite 6 million students is going to make a impact on ALL of the students in the State of Texas, nor do I see that it is clearly defined. The perception is that this is being crammed down our throats in a parental tone of "It's what we're doing because I said so." Rural school districts like we live in cannot participate in choosing Private or Charter schools. So again, the "ALL" used in promoting School Choice does not include my children. To the Members of the House voting on this Bill, read the room. It is not the correct choice and the people need to have more of a say in this. Our public school system is broken, I agree with that, but it's not so broken if we can better support it and focus on repairing it. Focus in the where the Majority of Students attend to make the greatest impact. Not on ~ 1-2% of the Texas student population. I appreciate your time and your consideration into this matter.

Thank you and God bless Texas,

Wesley Young

Margarita Mintzer

Self

Austin, TX

Vote no on any form of voucher or education savings account. Raise basic allotment by \$1300 and fund public schools by enrollment bot attendance.

Amanda Spell

Self - Department Coordinator

Abilene, TX

I wholeheartedly support public education in Texas and want to see our schools and teachers funded at the highest possible level. I completely disagree with school choice and vouchers. It takes real dollars out of our public schools and removes valuable resources for our students and teachers.

Gracie Niver

Self

Waller, TX

I am against the approval of HB 2 and the support of public funding to private schools. Public funds should be spent on public education, and should not be used on privatized education no matter what the rules and requirements are. I implore you to listen to constituents on this matter.

Otis "Scotty" Scott, Jr., CCE/Ret

Inspire Academies

San Antonio, TX

My name is Otis Scott, Jr. and I'm on the board of trustees for Brination/Inspire Academies in San Antonio. I'm writing in strong support of HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. We're forced to stretch the rest of our budget — and make difficult sacrifices — in order to cover facilities costs.

I'm incredibly proud of the way Brination/Inspire Academies meets the needs of students in our community and positions them for future success. Why should they count for less?

ALL public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Best,

Otis L. Scott, Jr.

Board President

Brination/Inspire Academies

Heather Huff

Self

Amarillo, TX

I am opposed to the vouchers and think it is not the best decision for Texas and Texas Education.

Karen Marcucci
SELF / Quality Engineer
MANSFIELD, TX

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my thoughts on House Bill 2 (HB 2). While I support efforts to strengthen Texas education, I have serious concerns about certain provisions in this bill that could negatively impact public schools.

- **Insufficient Per-Student Funding Increase.** The proposed \$220 per-student funding increase does not keep up with inflation or the rising costs of education. Schools are struggling with teacher shortages, aging infrastructure, and growing student needs. A larger funding increase is essential to ensure schools can continue to provide quality education.
- **Restrictive Funding Allocation.** Requiring 40% of new funding to go toward teacher raises, while well-intended, limits school districts' ability to address other urgent needs like classroom resources, technology, and student support programs. Districts should have flexibility in determining how to allocate funds.
- **Charter Schools Were Meant to Offer Choice—But Haven't Solved the Problem.** Charter schools were introduced as a way to give parents more options within the public school system, yet they have not delivered the widespread improvements promised. Many still struggle with accountability, funding equity, and accessibility for all students. If charter schools have not fully addressed these challenges, why would ESAs—essentially another attempt at school choice—be any more effective? Instead of repeating past mistakes, we should focus on strengthening our existing public schools.
- **Lack of Accountability for Public Funds.** Private schools that accept ESA funds are not held to the same financial and academic standards as public schools. If taxpayer money is used for private education, there must be strict oversight to ensure funds are used effectively.

Public education should be strengthened, not weakened. I urge lawmakers to reconsider HB 2's funding provisions, provide more flexibility for school districts, and ensure strong accountability for public funds. Instead of diverting resources to unproven programs, we should invest in improving our existing public school system for all students.

I appreciate your time and consideration and welcome further discussion.

Jandel Crutchfield
Mansfield ISD school board
Mansfield, TX

As a dedicated school board member, I have seen firsthand the potential and the success of our children within the Mansfield ISD. Our performance is above average, we are a community that prides itself in our educational institutions, and we provide school choice within our district. Yet, to uphold the high standards of education we provide, we are in dire need of proper funding.

As such, we are calling on the Texas House Public Education Committee to increase per pupil spending by \$1300. Investing in our students is not just beneficial to them but to our society as a whole. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, increasing per-student spending yields significant improvements in educational attainment and earnings for students and could substantially alleviate poverty and inequality in adulthood.

Hope Scott, Retired
Port Arthur City Council of PTAs
Port Arthur, TX

I am adding my voice to the many constituents who feel that public funds should not be siphoned off for private schools. Public schools have to meet rigorous standards or face sanctions from the state. We have to meet accountability measures that private schools will not be forced to meet.

Public schools must meet the need of the whole child, mental, physical, and emotional. Public schools have people in place with credentials to meet those needs.

I taught Web Design. I had students in my class that were severely handicapped, but I was able to help them complete a very difficult class. As a matter of fact, one of my students graduated from UT. I was there when he rolled his motorized wheelchair up on the podium to receive his degree. Proud public school teacher moment!

The gist of my comment is that unless private schools face the same scrutiny, they should NOT receive public funds. It doesn't help that they would receive more per child for less accountability than public schools!

Andy Greenawalt, MR
Austin Achieve Public Schools
Austin, TX

My name is Andy Greenawalt. I'm a founding board member and former board chair for Austin Achieve Public Schools. I'm also a board member of Charter Schools Now. I'm writing in strong support of HB2, especially the provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

We all know that public charter schools receive more than \$1600 less per student per year than traditional ISD's. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. That forces charter schools like ours to reallocate funds from the rest of our budgets, making difficult sacrifices to cover these facilities shortfalls.

I'm very proud of how Austin Achieve meets the needs of the scholars in our community despite these shortfalls. I can only imagine the fantastic things we could do if the funding was equitable.

All public school students deserve facilities that keep them safe and make them feel proud and excited to learn. HB2 will help Texas deliver that promise for all children, families, and educators.

S. Dwyer
Self - higher education employee
San Antonio, TX

HB 2 by Rep. Brad Buckley includes some positive steps, but the proposed \$220 basic allotment increase per student is far too low. To keep up with inflation and ensure quality education, schools need at least a \$1,340 increase per student.

I urge you to significantly increase the per-student funding allotment, provide guaranteed raises for all public school employees, and boost funding for special education and school infrastructure. Notably, these priorities are already covered in a bill filed in this legislative session: HB 1257 by Rep. John Bryant.

Please support HB 1257 by Rep. John Bryant. It better represents the needs of our students and our teachers.

WAYNE STALSWORTH
Self. Retired teacher
Seguin, TX

You all had the audacity to suggested 10K for private school students, but just over 6K for public school students. Duh. If private school students are worth 10K, so are public school students. Fund ALL students at the rate of 10K! No more social and economic inequalities!!!!!!Some of you seem to think you're better than the rest of us. That's Taliban, and ISIS BS. Here ALL people are created equal!!!!!!

Amy Boone
self
Abilene, TX

I am MORE in favor of HB 2 because of the very important matter of NO VOUCHERS with public school money. Period. However, the amount per student proposed here is woefully low. Please increase the amount.

Taria Usher
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Representatives,

My name is Taria Usher, and I am a Texas public school educator.
I am writing to inform you that I am 100% AGAINST the bills HB2 and HB3, and any similar bills, that would authorize Private and Homeschool vouchers (Education Savings Accounts).

In addition to benefiting private schools that do not face the same stringent accountability measures as public schools, AND benefitting billionaire backers in the decades to come (like Tim Dunn and Dan and Farris Wilks), these bills are grossly inadequate in meeting the large funding needs of public schools for teacher and staff pay raises, special education staffing, transportation costs, utility/maintenance costs, and mandated safety measures. The basic allotment for each general education public school student remains at an abysmal \$6,160 (less deductions for each day of missed attendance, per the convoluted State School Funding Formula).

My future votes will be AGAINST any lawmakers who support this modern means of state-funded segregation and erosion of overall educational quality throughout our state. I will also encourage my friends and family to do the same. Instead, I am in favor of HB351 (to adjust the basic allotment to reflect inflation). Thank you for your time and strong consideration of these factors as you prepare for important votes in session.

Respectfully,
Taria Usher

Jacinda Simmons
Self - CPA
Clyde, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers. Our public schools need better funding, not our private schools.

Mauri Westbrook
self
Abilene, TX

Please amend this bill to increase the basic allotment. Texas schools and teachers need and deserve more resources to adequately fund public education.

Lisa Morales
Self. Mental health professional.
Nolanville, TX

I am asking that Rep Buckley not seek support of any funding structures other than that of fully funding public schools. I demand that he and other Republican representatives take accountability for their concerted efforts to hurt our public schools system in TX and make things right. Oppose school vouchers and ESAs.

Cameron Wiley, School Board Trustee
Self/Abilene Wylie ISD School Board Place 7
Tuscola, TX

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding House Bill 2 and House Bill 3 as currently written. While I appreciate the effort to address public school funding and teacher compensation, these bills fail to provide the level of support that Texas schools, educators, and students truly need. HB 2 proposes an increase of only \$220 per student, raising the basic allotment from \$6,160 to \$6,380. This amount is simply inadequate. Schools across Texas have been forced to pass deficit budgets in recent years, and to keep up with inflation, districts need at least \$1,000 more per student. The proposed increase does not restore funding to sustainable levels and leaves schools struggling to maintain quality education. The bill also requires that 40% of any increase be allocated toward teacher raises, which is an improvement over the current 30% requirement. However, the increase itself is so small that it will result in minimal raises for teachers. Additionally, this bill does not address other critical school personnel, such as administrators and support staff, who are equally essential to school operations and student success. Without addressing these positions, schools will continue to struggle to retain experienced employees. Another concern is the restriction on uncertified teachers in core subjects. While ensuring qualified educators in every classroom is important, this change does not address the root of the issue, teacher shortages. In 2023, nearly 40% of new hires were uncertified, and many districts rely on these educators due to hiring challenges. This system does not fully capture teacher effectiveness and continues the overemphasis on standardized testing instead of using a more holistic evaluation approach. I do appreciate the proposed shift in special education funding to a needs-based model, which is an improvement from the current system. However, the bill does not go far enough in providing the resources necessary for schools to fully support students with disabilities. Without a meaningful increase in funding, the transition to this new model may not achieve its intended impact. Public schools already lack adequate financial support, and introducing a program that pulls from the same funding pool could negatively impact students who rely on public education. I strongly urge the committee to revise these bills to provide a meaningful increase in the basic allotment, ensure real teacher raises that also extend to other school staff, address teacher shortages with long-term solutions rather than restrictive policies. Our public schools, educators, and students deserve better. I appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns and respectfully request that these bills be amended to meet the real needs of Texas public education.

Carol Hubbard
Self
Georgetown, TX

HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase is insulting; falling far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Wendy Jones
Self
Abilene, TX

The data is clear that the majority of Texans are against school vouchers. Those that vote are asking you to listen to the majority. We will not forget this issue when we return to the polls.

Teresa Rios
Self and family
Liberty Hill, TX

I vote for taxpayer dollars to stay in public schools.

Abigail Payne
Self/executive director
Abilene, TX

I am against school vouchers for these reasons:

1. Private schools tuition prices will go up.
2. Funding for public schools will go down.
3. Inevitably there will be state mandates testing for homeschool students.

There is no identifiable benefit from vouchers, except for the ultra rich that will not care when private school prices increase.

Emily Kaszczuk
Self/ parent
Leander, TX

As a parent of two elementary students and a member of the PTA, I would like HB2 to increase the basic allotment by at least \$1300. To ensure funding keeps up with inflation, the basic allotment should automatically adjust for cost of living changes. I would also request an amendment to base funding on enrollment versus attendance.

ROBIN BEERMAN, Ms
Self: Retired PUBLIC SCHOOL Teacher
Houston, TX

PLEASE vote AGAINST (oppose) funding for private schools vouchers. Public money should be spent for PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Those who choose to send their children to private schools can afford to do so & those without the funds to do so have the opportunity to get scholarships from the private schools of their choice. PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING SHOULD NOT BE COMPROMISED BY GIVING TO THE WEALTHY.

Jenna Cope
Swlf
Abilene, TX

Please listen to the people's voices... The people you took an oath to serve and represent. Fund public education fully. No vouchers. Your service is to the children of our state and teachers that serve them. NOT to a governor or lobbyists or private schools.

Sandra Kuehl
Self - Retired
Houston, TX

Public Education is just that education for the public NOT private NOT charter - just public and schools should be financed properly per the constitution.. this plan to funnel monies through vouchers for private schools sending our tax dollars away from public funding to enrich is bs and you people know it... If you want private then pay for it yourself NOT WITH OUR TAX DOLLARS... do the right thing for the kids

Arnetta Murray
City of Iowa Colony
Iowa Colony, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to school vouchers and House Bill 2 (HB2). Public education is the foundation of our communities, and taxpayer money should be used to strengthen it rather than diverting funds to private schools that are not accountable to the public.

If private schools need additional funding, then those who can afford them should be responsible for creating a private fund to support families who choose that route. The burden should not fall on taxpayers, particularly when public schools are struggling with underfunding, teacher shortages, and outdated resources. Texas should be investing in our public education system to ensure every child receives a quality education, regardless of their zip code or socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, I urge Governor Abbott to stop holding our tax dollars hostage and instead allocate them to the public schools that serve the majority of Texas students. Our teachers deserve better pay, our schools deserve proper funding, and our children deserve equitable educational opportunities. HB2 does not address these pressing needs; instead, it undermines the work of educators and the strength of our public education system.

I ask you to stand with Texas teachers, parents, and students by opposing HB2 and supporting policies that fund and uplift public schools rather than dismantling them.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and hope you will advocate for the future of public education in Texas.

Omar Rodriguez
Texans for Homeschool Freedom
Edinburg, TX

Hello, my name is Omar Rodriguez. I am writing regarding the Education Committee hearing for House Bill 3 on Tuesday. As a homeschool parent, I value freedom from government strings and regulations in private education, and am against the expansion of government in the name of "parental empowerment." I would like to ask Representative Terry Canales to please join a large constituency of homeschoolers in opposing "school choice" legislation like HB 3. Thank you!

Cindy Skinner
Self
Lago Vista, TX

I want you to know that this Voucher Scam represents a fight between a bi-partisan, pro public education coalition vs. billionaire mega-donors who control Greg Abbott and Dan Patrick. Your constituents love their kids, believe in public school teachers, support our neighborhood schools and want them fully funded. We don't want a Voucher Scam that will eventually defund our local schools.

I would like to see these things:

- * the Basic allotment tied to inflation indexes so Gov Abbott cannot hold it hostage anymore
- * The basic allotment become enrollment-based vs. attendance based
- * Full funding to make up for 6 years of missing funding
- * Vote NO on the Voucher Scam.

Thank you.

Brittany Gurganus
Self
Abilene, TX

The daily allotment needs to keep up with inflation!

Emily Hart
Self
Abilene, TX

I am vehemently opposed to vouchers for private schools. In our town there are two small private schools and not near enough space to take potentially thousands of students. Where are all these new private schools going to come from? And what keeps the schools from just raising tuition \$10,000/year?!

According to press releases issued by the bill's lead sponsors in both chambers, the scheme would cost the U.S. Treasury \$10 billion a year—\$100 billion over a 10-year period.

In return for donations to scholarship-granting organizations (SGOs) that pay for private and religious schools, individuals and corporations would get dollar-for-dollar tax credits worth far more than the usual deduction for charitable contributions. People could also offload stocks to SGOs and evade taxes on capital gains.

Not only is the scheme unfair, it ignores the overwhelming majority of our students: 90% of Americans attend public school.

Vouchers don't work in the rural communities where public schools are the economic center. Nor do they improve student performance. Moreover, special needs students who attend private schools lose important legal rights and protections.

America cannot afford to fund two education systems—one private and one public. Taxpayer dollars should go to public schools open to all students, not private schools that can pick and choose their students.

That's why voters all across America have rejected voucher schemes every time they're on the ballot—17 times.

Please oppose this bill and any other efforts to distort the tax code with voucher-inspired schemes.

Hollie Plemons, Mom of 3
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am against HB2 because I do not believe dumping more money on public education is the solution. I will never support furthering the failed prek programs that do not help children. My ISD is FWISD & they have been a pilot for so much of what's in HB2, FWISD is the worst ranked large ISD in Texas with 0% of 7th graders able to master math.

HB2, 3, 4 & 6 are all awful bills. Stop letting Todd Williams & TPPF write your bills. They are both the worst thing that has ever happened to public education in Texas.

Matthew Short, Dr.

Self

Schertz, TX

As a dedicated Texas educator, I cannot stay silent while Senate Bill 2 (SB2) threatens the future of public education. This bill diverts critical funding from our public schools to private interests, leaving behind the students who need support the most—low-income families, rural communities, and students with disabilities.

SB2 does not expand choice; it deepens inequities. Underfunded schools are already struggling with overcrowded classrooms, a lack of mental health services, and insufficient resources. Instead of solving these issues, SB2 worsens them. Additionally, it accelerates the teacher shortage by making it even harder to retain qualified educators.

If Texas truly values its students, we must invest in public education, not dismantle it. I urge you to oppose SB2 and prioritize:

- Fully funding public schools so all students have access to a quality education.
- Raising teacher salaries and reducing class sizes to improve retention and student outcomes.
- Expanding mental health and special education services to support every child's needs.
- Holding all institutions receiving public funds to the same rigorous standards as public schools.

Public education is the backbone of our communities and the future of Texas. Please stand with educators, students, and families by rejecting SB2.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew Short

Texas Public Educator

Kelly Trumble

Self/Veteran Texas Public Educator

Abilene, TX

House Bill 2 proposes an increase of \$220 per student in the basic allotment, totaling over \$3.2 billion in additional funding for public education. While any increase is welcome, this amount falls short of addressing the escalating financial challenges our public schools face. For instance, Northside Independent School District is confronting a \$70 million budget shortfall, leading to hiring freezes and spending cuts. The proposed funding would only partially mitigate such deficits, leaving districts struggling to maintain essential services and programs. Moreover, HB 2 mandates that at least 40% of any funding increases be allocated to raises for teachers and other district employees, up from the current 30% requirement. While this aims to improve teacher compensation, the limited increase may result in only modest raises, insufficient to attract and retain qualified educators. Another critical issue in current education policy is the inadequate investment in teacher salaries. Educators play a pivotal role in shaping the future yet often face financial challenges. While some districts offer the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) to reward high performance, administrative complexities hinder widespread adoption. In most professions, exceptional performance is rewarded with increased compensation; this principle should apply to teaching to attract and retain top talent. If the funding would return to the public system. This ambiguity could result in financial shortfalls for public schools, affecting their ability to plan and allocate resources effectively.

- Student Discipline and Support: Private schools may have policies that allow them to expel students with behavioral issues, who would then return to public schools. Without corresponding funding, public schools would bear the responsibility of providing necessary interventions without additional resources, straining their capacity to support all students. In Texas, I urge you to consider the following: Provide substantial and sustainable funding increases to public schools to address current deficits and future needs, ensuring all students have access to quality education; Implement uniform accountability measures for any institution receiving public funds to maintain educational standards and transparency; and Develop comprehensive strategies to improve teacher salaries and working conditions, recognizing their critical role in student success and societal advancement. In conclusion, while the intention behind HB 2 and HB 3 may be to improve educational outcomes, their current provisions could undermine public education by diverting funds, reducing accountability, and neglecting the pressing issue of teacher compensation. I respectfully urge you to reconsider these bills and advocate for policies that strengthen our public schools, ensuring every Texas student receives a high-quality education.

Amy Duty
Self/Public School Teacher, Pastor's Wife & Precinct Chair
Houston, TX

HB 2 increases the bureaucracy currently burdening public schools. I am in my 21st year teaching in a district facing \$76 million in yearly underfunded mandates.

TRANSPORTATION: State allocation \$3M / District cost \$18.8M / UNDERFUNDED \$15.8M

SPECIAL ED: State allocation \$28.8M / District cost \$80.4M / UNDERFUNDED \$51.4M

SAFETY: State allocation \$1.3 M / District cost \$10M / UNDERFUNDED \$8.7M

Budget shortfalls lead to staff layoffs and larger classroom sizes. Any proposed funding increases should reflect the true historic inflation rate impacting schools. It is critical that adjustments account for the rising costs districts face to ensure sustained quality education.

The six million public school children deserve more than the 3.57% increase from \$6,160 to \$6,380. \$6,160 has been the basic allotment since 2019. \$6,380 is a travesty compared to legislation recommending \$10,000 for ESV students. Special education funding needs to be calculated separately from regular student funding. Attaching the basic allotment to attendance disregards the cost of running a school whether the child is in attendance or not. Other states do not connect school funding to attendance.

Taylor Tidmore, Dr.
Self - Physician
Abilene, TX

I just recently joined the Abilene ISD school board in June of 2024. I am still learning a lot, but I have really enjoyed the job so far. I have had children in AISD for 15 years and it was my deep love for the district that motivated me to run for school board last year. While I have always been very appreciative of the district, being on the board and getting an insider's look has made my love and appreciation of our district, our administrators, and our teachers grow exponentially. I get to witness on a regular basis a group of people giving their heart and soul to better the lives of the children of our community.

While the work they do is so impressive, it often seems they are fighting an uphill battle. It often feels like they are not getting the support and appreciation they need and deserve from the state level. While money cannot solve every problem, it sure would make their jobs easier and their chances of success seem much more in reach.

In August the AISD school board, like 50-60% of the districts in our state, adopted a deficit budget (\$14 million in our case). We did not adopt a deficit budget because we are not being good stewards of our money or because we are being wasteful. It is because our public schools are not being funded at a level that has kept up with inflation and allows us to do the job of educating kids at the highest level. In the last six months we have made major changes to help us move towards a balanced budget—implemented a hiring freeze, enforced a strict staffing matrix, voted to close two elementary schools (one of which my kids attended for 14 years), and asked principals to begin cutting expenses by 5-10%, just to name a few examples.

I am asking you to fight for an increase in the basic allotment. While special moneys for safety, implementing new curriculum, and teacher raises is great there is no guarantee the money will be given in the next legislative session. The basic allotment is the money schools can count on to be there consistently and that they can base a balanced budget on. A \$500-\$1000 increase in the basic allotment would go a long way towards allowing districts like ours and others across the state to do the job they are asked to do.

I would also ask that you vote against Governor Abbott's Education Freedom Plan / ESA / vouchers. Using state funds for private school education is unacceptable in my opinion. We have a lot of low-income families in our district. Even if you give them \$10,000 they still cannot afford one of the few private schools in our city. And even if they can come up with the funds there is no guarantee the private school will accept them. Not to mention all the rural communities in our area have no private school options to even consider. Taking money from struggling and hurting schools and giving it to private schools is not the solution.

I think you are aware that the large majority of the Texas public is against vouchers. Please listen to them!

Charity VanRyzin
Self
Abilene, TX

We are against vouchers! Please listen to the people of Texas!

Bailey Castillo, Mrs.
Self, Speech Therapist
Beaumont, TX

Public education continues to go down the toilet because money has become more important than the education of our future generations. Take a look at test scores. Take a look at how many accommodations are being used by students. Take a look at how our education compares on a world scale. We are sacrificing our future generations' knowledge for momentary wealth.

Amy Olles
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I do not support vouchers for Texans. I am an ardent supporter of public education. I have nieces and nephews, and friends with children that all rely on public schools for their education. I work with children in the foster care system and for those children, public school is the only educational option available to them. Further defunding public's schools, which would happen under this proposed voucher scam, will be devastating to the future of these children. Some of the children I know do not even have a private school option near them.

This bill is cruel and builds barriers to education for lower income families, for middle class families, for families going through hard times (such as those I work with in the foster care system), and even those families that are moving from lower to upper middle class status.

We need our elected officials to do their real job: fully fund public schools, strengthen and build the infrastructure for these public places of learning to serve more children and families in Texas, and ensure that Texans have affordable access to good educational options. That's what you are supposed to be doing with our tax dollars. Not pushing this unpopular and destructive voucher scam onto us in an effort to gain favor with Gov Abbott or line your pockets with outside influencer donor money. Fully fund Texas schools, pay teachers the wages they deserve and fund the teacher retirement program fully. Do not support this shameful voucher bill.

Alicia Hatter
Self
Amarillo, TX

Vote NO to HB2. We don't want vouchers.

Nina Brodsky, MRS
self
Austin, TX

I am appalled at Trump and his cohorts cozying up to Putin. Stopping cyberoperations against Russia is a big mistake among many he is making with Russia. Putin is not our friend and Trump, the fool, is being played. When are you going to stand up and protect the American people? Is your hatred for us so great that you want to see us destroyed? That is what is at stake. Trump is destroying our constitution, our democracy and even perhaps our existence. Why aren't you doing something to stop him?

Cody Knott

Yes

Eastland, TX

To Whom It May Concern,

As a committed educator in Texas, I respectfully urge you to carefully consider the impact of passing a voucher bill in our state. For too long, teachers have been affected by political agendas. Much like police officers, firefighters, and EMTs, we are public servants who dedicate ourselves to the well-being and success of our students. Public schools must be preserved because they serve all students, unlike private and charter schools, which often have selective admissions processes.

It is crucial that we ensure public funds stay within public schools and dispel the notion that parents are not involved in their children's education. While many parents are actively engaged, others are not. However, it is important to remember that parents are the primary influence on their children's education. Despite teachers' best efforts to connect through calls, emails, and letters, some parents remain disengaged. Data from parent-teacher conferences across the state shows a wide range of participation. Teachers should not be used as political pawns, and the term "school choice" should not be reduced to a political slogan. Parents are always encouraged to work with teachers to support their child's learning.

We are left wondering why there is a teacher shortage, especially when educators are so often criticized by those in Austin. If real change is to occur, it is essential that teachers are consulted and included in these discussions. Change can only happen when we come together with a shared vision. Our common goal should always be prioritizing students and ensuring their success.

Please take into account the perspectives of teachers, who advocate for the best interests of students. Collaboration between parents and educators is key to supporting every child's well-being. Political slogans and baseless criticism hinder productive dialogue. Scheduling more meetings with both parents and teachers at public schools will allow us to create meaningful change. As educators committed to our communities, we must have a voice in shaping the future of education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cody Knott

Teacher, Eastland, TX

Eve Margolis

self

Austin, TX

It is abundantly clear that Texans don't want vouchers. As you have noticed by the pushback received at public events, people see vouchers for what they are.

The push for vouchers started all the way back to Brown vs. Board of Education, the beginning of desegregation. Using a voucher is completely dependent on personal situations: Do they have transportation? Can they afford the inevitable increase in tuition? Do they need special needs that the school cannot/will not provide for? While everyone can apply, only 100k will be chosen to receive the limited funds.

It is disappointing and disgusting that representatives of the people of Texas have no regard for the Texas constitution to offer free and fair education to all Texans.

We see you and will show up to hearings to your town halls and to your offices.

Jennifer Kahla

Self

Cypress, TX

I am incredibly disappointed by the pressure to move forward with vouchers/school savings accounts. Call them what you want, they are not in the best interest of our public schools and students. Which means they are not in the best interest of Texans. Please reconsider your position and priorities.

Darin Nance
Alpine ISD
Alpine, TX

This comment is in reference to 'SECTION 1.27. Subchapter F, Chapter 48, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 48.2711 and 48.284 to read as follows'.

Dear Representatives,

I am on the CAD board in Brewster County and also work as a Technology Director for Alpine ISD. This section of HB2 is trying to solve a legitimate problem, but I don't agree with it's solution. The state of Texas mandates that county appraisal districts (CADs) are required to set appraisal values at market value determinations as of January 1st of the current year. The Texas Comptroller has access to market value sales data via the MLS, however local CAD chief appraisers do not have access to this information. Some believe this is a privacy argument, but I disagree. Thirty-eight of fifty states are 'disclosure' states in the US, with Texas being one of the 12 that are not. I recommend changing this section so that the state of Texas moves to becoming a disclosure state - or at least giving fee appraisers and CAD boards access to market data - as the comptroller has. This would give CAD boards the ability to get their valuations in line with state values quickly and in an efficient way. CAD boards might even be able to work on leaner staffs as they wouldn't have to 'investigate' market values - they would simply have them.

By the language of this bill, you are passing the inefficient process costs of not giving CAD boards market (MLS) data, on to the taxpayer. The taxpayer (state funds) will now cover the cost for school districts that have CAD boards that cannot pass PVS (Property Value Studies). CAD value misalignment is absolutely an issue for school districts that needs to be fixed, but I disagree with your solution. The easier solution, and cheaper one for the taxpayer, is to become a disclosure state and simply give fee appraisers access to MLS market sales data. This could be done for smaller, rural CAD boards if it is not politically palatable across the board. I've been told the real estate lobby makes it difficult to become a disclosure state, but I believe it's worth the fight to save taxpayer monies and to make a more efficient process.

I'll be interested to see how much money the state spends covering school district CAD funding issues if this section is adopted. Whatever the number, that money could be spent elsewhere for taxpayers. In conclusion, the simplest process is to make Texas a disclosure state and to give CAD boards access to the market sales information they need. I hope you argue this point for the Texas taxpayer, at the same time realizing that this is a legitimate funding issue for school districts that needs to be resolved. Thank you for your time.

Darin Nance
Brewster County Appraisal District
Alpine, Texas

Anna Francis
Self
Austin, TX

NO vouchers!! They hurt Texas children and families. Raise the allotment for public education. Our kids are our future- let's invest in them and make this state bigger and brighter!

Chloe Crumley
Self
Austin, TX

I would like to state my support to fully fund our public school system. At some points in our lives, we have spent 7-8 hours a day in our schools. Our public schools give us the education, skills, and social norms to lead fulfilling lives and participate in the economy of our state as we move into jobs. We must fully fund our schools and give all students the chance to succeed within the public school system. With inflation, city growth, out of date facilities, and the need for high quality teachers will always continue to cost the state and it is well spent funds. HB2 helps to increase funding opportunities. While there are nuances in the bill that needs to be taken into consideration, I defer to the experts who understand those and how to adjust them to meet their needs. Conversely, HB3 removes funding away from public schools and harms the overall chance for every Texas student receive the education they deserve.

Mark Klyn
self/School Psychologist
Henrietta, TX

I am in large support of HB2. However, please be sure that the basic allotment is indexed to inflation. Please be sure to remove the penalty through no fault of school districts for tax appraisal penalties arising from conflict between local appraisal vs. state estimated appraisals. While those differences are important to remedy, please hold our school districts as no fault since the boards of trustees have no remedy for this penalty. Finally, although perhaps not a part of HB2 remember our retirees served Texas students faithfully and should be offered the same respect as first responders. Teachers are as important to a healthy society as first responders are to protecting and serving Texans. Let's take care of them!

Tina Crews-Carouthers
Futuro San Antonio
New Braunfels, TX

We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Monique Silva
Self/Analyst
San Antonio, TX

The defunding of public schools to fund private education is an attack on the basic rights of students in Texas. There is no budget surplus- our schools need additional funding and it's being held back to further the interests of Gov. Abbot and his supporters. Public education should provide a quality education that levels the playing field for all students. Teachers deserve living wages. Classrooms should be stocked with supplies and learning enhancing tools. Stop taking from our students- increase funding for public education and drop the voucher proposal- it will actively harm children.

Maria Burdick
self
Houston, TX

I oppose HB2 and any use of public funds for vouchers, ESA's or whatever you wish to call this scam. I have not met 1 person or seen 1 poll that shows Texas residents want this. I do know that there are several billionaires who support this plan. Do who is this bill benefiting? Certainly not the public school students of Texas.

Leonora Boulton
Self, Texas mom
Austin, TX

This is a scam. Children are failing in public schools because they are underfunded. Listen to teachers and families, fund public schools. This is a push by billionaires, not the people, as evidenced by Brad Buckley being booed off stage not once, but twice last week. If you are booed by the Texas PTA, who are you working for exactly?

Sandra Maltese

Self

Dallas, TX

“Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education.” In my district (HPISD), insufficient special education funds cause denied and delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing and lack of effective dyslexia intervention! My granddaughter whom I have custody of, has ADHD and Dyslexia. She is a freshman in high school and I fear she will stop getting the support that she needs to succeed. Fully funding special education for evaluating and implementing special reading instruction for children who have Dyslexia helps society as well. It is a fact that children that do not learn to read many times do not become productive people in society and many have even ended up in prison for reasons no one needs to experience.

Christine Maynor-Burchsted

Grandparents for Public Schools (GPS)

Round Rock, TX

A school funding bill needs to be separated from any bill for school vouchers/ ESA. Our public schools and teachers need increased funding immediately regardless of vouchers getting passed. Abbott needs to stop holding increased funding for public schools hostage to voucher bills.

I agree with increasing funding per student enrolled, but it needs to be a lot more to account for inflation; loss of 5 percent of students to voucher programs, an increase in special needs costs and to get Texas teachers a more competitive Salary compared to other states, Texas currently ranks 30th in teacher pay. Buckley wants to increase by \$220/ student but others have called for an increase closer to \$1000 or more/ student. The allotment has not been increased since 2019 and before that 2010. We need an allotment that automatically increases as inflation costs increase, inflation based adjustments.

Your bill needs to include funding based on student enrollment and not the current average daily attendance. The cost to run the school is the same even when students are sick.

I agree with the bill to allow children with disabilities to attend free preK. I agree funding for children with disabilities should be based on the students individual needs and insure schools districts have enough funding to cover increase in special education evaluations.

Julia Dzubinski

self

Austin, TX

I ask the committee to please listen to their constituents when it comes to HB2. Overwhelmingly, the Texans do not support this bill. Overwhelming the people in the state of Texas want amazing, competitive, well-funded public schools in this state. I worry what this bill will do to our public schools all over the state, but especially those schools in vulnerable rural communities that do not have private education options and their public schools will suffer from underfunding. So many students rely on their schools for so much more than just an education. These students rely on their teachers for advice, guidance, and mentorship. If we continue to not focus on how to fund our public schools, we will lose amazing educators in this state who are the ones that take care of our children. We can not be competitive in the public sphere when you are not making the starting line at the same spot for privatized institutions. By passing this voucher bill, wealthy families will get a tuition break, and yet their children will never be held to the same standards the state continues to hold students in public education. Please take a stand against Governor Abbot's vision for education in Texas. We are trying to be loud, we are trying to be heard, we want better for the next generation.

Kristin Shaw
Self/ writer
West Lake Hills, TX

As a taxpayer in Texas who has lived in Austin for 16 years, I object to my money being spent on private school. Our public schools are critical to the current and future of Texas, and Governor Abbott has held the funds for schools hostage for too long. Families who can afford private school don't need a discount, and there is already an abundance of choice. This push for vouchers begs for an investigation into Governor Abbott's and other lawmakers' personal funds; are they benefiting from this type of law? Private schools and teachers are not subject to the same scrutiny as public schools and there is no reason to divert any school funds to them. Children in Texas deserve faction-free education in a public school that gets our support and funding. It's shameful that our state pays so little into the education system, and diluting it not only flies in the face of common sense; it's criminal.

Danielle Ramirez, Dr.
Georgetown ISD Parent
Georgetown, TX

While we are seeing some movement in a positive direction, more needs to be done to address the financial challenges faced by public school districts. These challenges have been exacerbated by the state's decision to freeze funding during a 5-year period of historic inflation, which has left districts scrambling to cover increasing costs. This lack of sufficient funding has resulted in resource shortages, larger class sizes, and underpaid teachers, ultimately harming student outcomes. Equity in Funding: Funding must be distributed equitably across districts. Currently, many districts, particularly those in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, struggle to provide adequate resources for their students due to funding inequities. The state's funding model must ensure that all students—regardless of where they live—have access to the same quality education. Disparities in funding contribute to unequal educational opportunities, and Texas must prioritize an equitable funding system that supports all districts, especially those serving the most vulnerable communities. In addition to performance-based bonuses, starting salaries for teachers must be increased. Texas consistently ranks among the lowest in the nation for teacher pay, which is a major factor in the state's teacher shortage. Low salaries make it difficult to recruit and retain high-quality educators, and the result is larger class sizes, increased workloads, and burnout. Teachers are one of the most important factors in student success, yet they are often underpaid and undervalued. The current funding model is insufficient to meet the growing needs of students, and while HB 2 is a step in the right direction, it falls short of providing the necessary resources to achieve these goals. We urge lawmakers to take bold action and provide the funding that Texas students, teachers, and communities deserve.

Norman Howden
self
Dallas, TX

This bill unfairly doubles the amount per student in charter schools compared to amounts going public schools. Please make this a fair allocation - not a boondoggle for charter schools.

Dee Ann Osteen
Family
Amarillo, TX

My husband and I are against the voucher program for education. Please spend this money on improving public education and teacher salaries. I have had children in both private and public schools, I have no bias against either. I have not talked to anyone(in the neighborhood, at work, at church, social groups) who are in favor of the voucher program.

Respectfully yours,
Dee Ann Osteen
806-676-6216

Kayla Lain
Self
Godley, TX

Please vote no on HB2, HB3, HB4, & HB6! We have school choice already, that is given to us by God, not the government. Please reject these spending and school choice bills that grow government and create more government regulations! ? And fix public education, that we already pay for, and where the majority of our kids will go!
<https://www.facebook.com/share/15miQALUgt/?mibextid=wwXIfr>

Emily Hermans
self, educator
Austin, TX

As a public school parent, I implore the House to increase the per student allotment by more than the current proposal. Rather than increasing it by \$220 per student, it needs to be increased by over \$1,000 per student. The state legislature has these funds and needs to invest them into our students, our schools, and our teachers. It is deeply disappointing how little is being given to allotted to ensure that future Texas workers and leaders are getting the foundations that they need to learn and grow, particularly given the voucher program that would taken even more funds out of our schools.

Tonya Smith, Dr.
self/ Texas Public Schools / Audiologists
Tuscola, TX

I am an audiologist (in the public schools) that serves students with any degree of hearing loss. I am married to an agriculture science teacher. The public school system is extremely important to us. We've spent MANY years working in public schools and we plan to continue. I can speak for both of us to express our concern with school funding. Public School Funding Must Be Increased! We work in two totally different areas of the public school system and we see the financial struggles daily. One of us specializes working with special needs and the other is preparing students to enter the workforce with agriculture and ag mechanics skills. My husband carries a caseload that would typically be done by no less than 3 teachers. He runs himself into the ground to provide for the students in his agriculture (CTE) program. He can take the most difficult child/student and make his class the place they strive to be daily. He changes lives everyday. He keeps students busy and out of trouble. He keeps them involved in activities that foster responsibility, budgeting, and life skills. I work with children that struggle to advocate for themselves due to disabilities. I teach them they CAN accomplish anything. I help them advocate for their special needs, I provide them with the accessory equipment they need to help with hearing in the classroom, I repair their hearing aids and cochlear implants, I teach them auditory skills. I strive to get them ready to enter community college or the workforce.

As you move forward with any decisions, please consider audiologists like me that are in the schools with the kids. We are educators and part of the instructional team on campuses just like teachers. My speciality is serving students with hearing loss to get their needs met. Please include audiologists in any legislation that pertains to pay increases for teachers. As I mentioned early, the basic allotment must increase for public education to thrive. We can't continue on the path of survival. My husband and I work with some of the most amazing students. We make a difference everyday in public education. We don't give up on kids. Please don't give up on us. Support us, fund us. Show Texas you stand with public educators and all the support staff that are involved as well. It takes our entire team to function. Unless you've spent time inside our daily work lives, you truly don't have a picture of the AMAZING things we accomplish. We are exhausted, spending our own money for work needs, and we don't give up. We are proud parents of public school students as well. Be the champion that is ready to truly support teacher and student needs. Be bold and think about "us," not what those around you may be pressuring you to do. We are the ones that live this life daily. Recognize us. With appreciation, Dr. Tonya Smith

Leticia Trigo
Teacher self
Edinburg, TX

Please vote no to vouchers!

Faye Inglis

Self. Retired elementary teacher

Dripping Springs, TX

As a former public school teacher and a recipient of the Teacher Retirement fund, I am writing to ask you to reject the school choice/ voucher bill!! It unfairly subsidizes the wealthy and depletes funds to public schools. It also depletes and endangered the TRS retirement fund and my monthly livelihood payment from TRS. Reject this bill!!

Holly Gorman

Texas Parent

AUSTIN, TX

Please raise the Basic Allotment to at least \$7,500 per student. Our school district is looking everywhere they can to cut the budget, and increasing the allotment at paltry \$200 a student is not enough to keep up with inflation, much less give my kids' amazing teachers the raises they deserve or fund previously unfunded mandates.

Denishea Williams

Cedar Hill ISD

Cedar Hill, TX

Basic Allotment (BA) Increase to \$6,380 per Student (\$3.2 billion)

Increasing the Basic Allotment is a positive step toward improving funding equity in our schools, but even \$6,380 may not reflect the rising costs associated with providing a quality education. A stronger increase is needed to ensure we meet the needs of every student. Increasing the Basic Allotment (BA) to \$7,500 per student is a necessary step to ensure our public schools can meet the rising costs of delivering quality education. Since 2019, the BA has remained at \$6,160 per student, failing to keep pace with inflation and increasing operational expenses. To restore the purchasing power of our schools, an increase to at least \$7,500 is essential.

Raise Your Hand Texas, a prominent education advocacy organization, has highlighted the urgency of this adjustment. They note that without increasing the BA, Texas will continue to rank among the bottom ten states in per-student funding, trailing the national average by nearly \$4,000 per student. Furthermore, the Texas School Alliance has provided cost estimates indicating that raising the BA to \$7,500 would require a significant investment. However, this investment is crucial for maintaining educational standards and supporting our teachers and students.

In summary, adjusting the Basic Allotment to \$7,500 is critical to ensure that Texas public schools can continue to provide high-quality education and remain competitive at the national level. The creation of a \$1,000-per-initial-SPED evaluation allotment is a positive step toward addressing delays in special education evaluations. However, as a mother of a special needs child, I see firsthand the gaps in funding and the ongoing challenges this creates. While the allotment will help initiate evaluations, additional funding is essential for continued support beyond the initial evaluation to ensure that students with disabilities receive the services they need to thrive.

Initial evaluations are only the first step in identifying a child's needs. Once these evaluations are completed, schools must provide specialized services, therapies, and accommodations, which often require sustained financial investment. Without adequate ongoing funding, schools struggle to meet the needs of special education students, leading to overworked staff, limited resources, and inconsistent support.

Additionally, the demand for qualified special education staff—such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and educational diagnosticians—far outweighs the supply. Insufficient funding hampers the ability of schools to hire and retain these professionals, which in turn delays essential services for children who need them the most.

As a parent, I can attest to the emotional and educational toll inadequate funding takes on families. This initial allotment must be coupled with expanded funding for ongoing services, professional development for staff, and innovative programs that support not just evaluations

Alexia Haywood

Myself as a tax paying citizen

Austin, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers. They will serve to give a tuition break to those who already attend private schools while draining much needed resources for our public schools. Public taxpayer money should stay in public schools. Release recapture and all funds. Give teachers raises. Up the per student allotment. This is not a partisan issue. Fund our public schools and look out for all of our Texas children!

Michelle Helmers

Self

Leander, TX

HB2: I support increasing the Basic Allotment to at least \$7500 per student

HB3: I oppose the creation of school vouchers. Please fully funded public education instead.

Nancy Randolph

Self

Lake Kiowa, TX

I am a 1st grade teacher with 40 years experience. I am glad to see that the house is making changes to senate bill but if private schools students are going to be given \$10,000 of public money (which is not constitutional in the Texas constitution) then public schools should receive the same allotment for their students.

2. teacher pay should not be tied to scores. The private schools should have to administer the staar test to receive esa money since it is state funds.

3. Public School districts and the private schools that are receiving funding from the state of Texas should have the same standards for certification and testing.

Our public schools are helping educate everyone so we have a readers and problem solvers in our next generations. This committee and our government should recognize this and try to help out teachers instead of making it harder to teach. This profession makes and develops all professions.

Jacque Abron

Self

Midlothian, TX

All students deserve a public education. Leave public schools alone and fully fund the schools. Stop messing with Texas education. Fully funded public school will perform better. No vouchers in Texas!

Colleen Wu

Self, healthcare

Austin, TX

HB 2 takes meaningful steps to improve public education funding, particularly in areas that have been long overdue for increased investment:

- Basic Allotment (BA) Increase: Raising the BA to \$6,380 per student is a necessary step toward keeping pace with rising costs and inflation. However, given that the BA has not been adjusted since 2019 and inflation has significantly eroded its value, a larger and more frequent adjustment mechanism—such as tying it to inflation—should be.
- Special Education Funding: The proposed \$1.8 billion increase for special education is a crucial investment, particularly with the inclusion of intensity-based funding. However, districts continue to face challenges in providing federally mandated services due to staffing shortages and rising costs. While the \$1,000-per-initial-SPED evaluation allotment is a step in the right direction, it is unlikely to fully cover the expenses required to address the backlog of evaluations. Additional funding and flexibility should be considered to ensure that all students receive timely and appropriate support.

NANCY REEDER

SELF

San Antonio, TX

I am strongly in favor of HB2 with the goal to support public education. ALL children can access public education whereas a limited number of privileged children have access to private schools.

Points of bill:

Basic allotment (BA) increase to \$6,380 from \$6,160 per student (\$3.2 billion) 40% (up from 30%) of any BA increase must be used for staff salary increases

Increases to the small and midsized allotments (\$1.1 billion)

Intensity-based special education funding and additional special education allotment funding (\$1.8 billion)

Creation of a \$1,000-per-initial-SPED evaluation allotment

Requirement to hire certified teachers for foundation curriculum courses

Prohibition against schools using districts of innovation law as an exemption from requirements regarding hiring certified teachers and notifying parents about classes taught by uncertified teachers

Grant funding to expand pre-k, fine arts, high school career advising, and other programs (\$1.5 billion)

Increased teacher compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment (\$750 million)

I am strongly opposed to the voucher system and believe that it is not in the best interest of Texas children. It panders to Gov. Abbott's ego that he has not been able to pass his bill in the past years and worked to primary out legislators who did not support his bill despite the fact that the legislator was supporting his constituents who voted him to represent them! If Gov. Abbott has been unable to pass his bill in the past it must mean that it is NOT supported by Texas voters.

Gretchen Pierce

self, stay-at-home mom

Austin, TX

I am a mom of two young kids who attend our wonderful neighborhood school. They are learning so much and are part of a really supportive community, but like almost every other district in Texas, Austin ISD is in financial crisis and having to make budget cuts that negatively impact every child's education. It does not have to be like this. Our public schools should be fully funded, and the basic allotment in HB2 does not begin to do that. We would need an increase of \$1,340 just to bring us back to 2019 funding, and even then we would still be one of the lowest in country in terms of per-student funding. Texas should not be proud of sending children to under-funded schools. The students at these schools are the future of our state, and we should want them to be as educated and prepared as possible. Please protect the future of Texas by fully funding our public schools.

Rosemary Guthridge

Self

Georgetown, TX

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase is insulting; falling far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Grace Mancilla, Mrs.

Self

Palestine, TX

The increase to basic allotment is not sufficient. We need a minimum of \$1000 increase per student.

Allison Vanderwoude

Highland Park ISD Education Foundation

Dallas, TX

Please vote to increase the Basic allotment (BA) to \$6,380 from \$6,160 per student (\$3.2 billion). There has not been an increase in years despite 20% inflation. Our costs to educate students have risen and our teachers deserve raises in pay to keep up with the rest of the employers in the world. We are going to lose good teachers if this is not fixed. It is a statewide problem. School Districts are also shutting down schools or making very impactful budget cuts in order to make their budgets work. This cannot keep happening. Public education in Texas should be a priority not an afterthought. I also feel vouchers are a bad idea for this very reason. Prioritize PUBLIC education.

Kellie Lewis

self

Austin, TX

- No to vouchers or ESA's
- Raise basic allotment to include inflation
- And change the funding from attendance to enrollment

Dianne Webb

Self, retired public school educator

Austin, TX

Please vote no on vouchers! Public schools need a commitment to more support and funding. They should be the sole focus of our tax spending on education. Do not put taxpayers in a position of funding private, primarily religious, schools. This is not only a violation of the separation of church and state, but also will inevitably become outrageously expensive and divert funding from public schools.

Jessica Ward

Midlothian ISD School Board Trustee

Midlothian, TX

Chairman Buckley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. While HB 2 increases the basic allotment, it fails to fully account for inflation since 2019. With ESSER funds ending, districts are forced to absorb rising costs without adequate state support. Midlothian ISD faces a \$3.9 million decline in state revenue from \$26.8 million in 2023-24 to \$22.8 million in 2024-25, despite a growing student population with greater needs.

Over the past four years, our special populations have increased significantly:

Economically Disadvantaged: 25.2% ? 32.4% (+7.2%)

Emergent Bilingual: 3.8% ? 5.6% (+1.8%)

Special Education: 12.8% ? 14.6% (+1.8%)

At-Risk: 32.2% ? 41.7% (+9.5%)

Despite these challenges, Midlothian ISD outperforms Region 10 and state averages on STAAR assessments, and our College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) rate is 83.4%. Our teachers and staff are among the best in Texas, yet we struggle to provide competitive pay. We are 4% below market for teacher salaries and are anticipating a \$6.1 million deficit in 2025-26 if funding remains unchanged.

Midlothian ISD offers a 10% homestead exemption—the only district in Ellis County to do so—costing us \$8 million annually. We want to maintain this relief for taxpayers, but without real state funding reform, it may have to be reconsidered.

Rising Costs & Budget Cuts

82.96% of our budget supports instruction and student services.

Operational costs are rising by \$1.46 million, including:

Property & Liability Insurance: +\$628,919

School Resource Officers (SROs): +\$423,900

Security, Utilities, Fuel, and Other Costs: +\$413,420

We have cut 17% of our operational budget and campus budgets by 10-15% annually.

Our transportation department drives 6,558 miles daily with 5,677 students, logging 1.1 million miles last year. We need new buses, yet funding remains stagnant. Our maintenance team saved \$48,100 in fuel costs and \$7,000 in tire re-treading, but efficiency has its limits—there's nothing left to cut without harming education quality.

Call to Action

Substantially increase the basic allotment to align with inflation and rising costs.

Address funding gaps for at-risk, bilingual, and special education students.

Provide transition funding to offset the loss of ESSER funds.

Ensure stable and predictable school funding.

Fix the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) so that all teachers can qualify for additional compensation.

Texas schools cannot survive on an additional \$220 per student. The 5.5 million students in Texas deserve more. Please do not let Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) distract from the urgent need for public school funding reform.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Respectfully submitted, Jessica Ward, Trustee Midlothian ISD

Tonya Garcia-Arnold, Dr.

Self

Killeen, TX

Good afternoon committee members.

Please do not support any legislation that takes money from public schools to distribute to private and/or charter schools. The systematic dismantling of Texas public schools through defending is unacceptable. Education in this state is under attack and in danger of jeopardizing Texas' ability to compete globally.

Judith Cherry, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

I am writing to protest the small increase in the daily allotment per student. It is woefully inadequate, and should be much larger. Our schools cannot continue to operate effectively without a larger increase. School districts are compelled to close down schools because of a lack of funding. As a result our schools have become warehouses with such large numbers of students that teachers cannot attend to them as well as they should. This lack of funding is leading to generations of students who are struggling with the basics. This must not continue for everyone's sake.

Nissa Lind

self

Austin, TX

While this bill has some good support aspects for special education and I support that for those kids as a parent, the basic allotment needs to be much higher for ALL public school kids in Texas. Taxpayer dollars and money from recapture needs to go back into education. The basic allotment should increase by a MINIMUM of \$1300 PER STUDENT ENROLLED at a public school required to submit to the STAAR Testing requirements for accountability.

My children have been in Austin ISD for the past 10 years and I've watched the quality of education deteriorate the last few years especially because of the budget starving by the governor and the legislature. Quality teachers aren't paid enough and leave to other professions, buildings aren't able to be maintained due to the 800 million sent to recapture that just bloats the state general budget and has not been put into education. You are destroying the future Texas workforce by not funding education. It's beyond disappointing that this bill was written with such a tiny BA increase even though the state hasn't increased funding since 2019. Do better. Increase the BA by \$1600 per pupil and then you will really see an improvement in Texas Public education across the state and every community. If the government doesn't think it worthwhile to invest in children and education, then it really shows how the government is anti-life because we end up in a caste system if you fund vouchers and not the BA. Without funding public education, you are lowering the entire population's quality of life.

Katie Nafius

Self

Austin, TX

Please properly fund PUBLIC schools with PUBLIC tax dollars. Please increase the per child spending so we can appropriately educate our future citizens. Please don't turn your back on public educators by not funding their life's work. Please don't allow Texas to continue to drop in education ratings in this country. Our public schools need your financial support. You were elected at the will of the people to do public service. There is no more fundamental public service than properly educating our future.

Sarah Swantner

self - mom and community volunteer

austin, TX

I oppose school vouchers in Texas argue because they divert public funds from already under-resourced public schools, potentially weakening the public education system. Vouchers may not truly expand educational opportunities for low-income families and might exacerbate inequities, and that private schools accepting voucher students may lack adequate accountability and transparency. Additionally, I have concerns about potential constitutional issues, like the separation of church and state, if vouchers support religious private schools.

Daiana Lambrecht

Futuro San Antonio

San Antonio, TX

Testimony in Support of Facilities Funding for Charter Schools

Honorable Members of the Texas House Committees on Public Education,

I come before you today to express my strong support for legislation that would equalize facilities funding for charter schools in Texas. As a community member deeply invested in the educational opportunities of all students, I firmly believe that every child, regardless of the type of school they attend, deserves access to safe, modern, and well-equipped learning environments. This bill represents a crucial step in ensuring that charter school students receive the same access to quality facilities as their peers in traditional Independent School Districts (ISDs).

Currently, charter schools face significant challenges in securing funding for facilities. Unlike ISDs, charter schools do not have the same access to local property taxes, making it difficult for them to finance and maintain the physical spaces that are vital for student success. As a result, many charter schools operate in outdated or inadequate facilities, which can limit the educational opportunities they offer and put students at a disadvantage.

This funding gap disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable students. Charter schools are often located in underserved communities and serve a higher proportion of low-income, minority, and at-risk students. Without adequate funding for facilities, these schools struggle to provide the resources and infrastructure needed to ensure students have access to the same educational opportunities as those in traditional ISDs. This inequity directly contradicts the principles of fairness and equal opportunity that our education system is supposed to uphold.

By equalizing funding for charter school facilities, we can ensure that charter school students are not left behind. This bill would give charter schools the ability to create safe, modern, and well-equipped spaces that foster learning, creativity, and academic achievement. It would level the playing field for students in charter schools, ensuring they can access the same opportunities for growth and success as students in traditional public schools.

I urge you to support this bill and take the necessary steps to ensure that all students in Texas, regardless of the school they attend, have access to the facilities they deserve. It is a matter of fairness, equity, and opportunity for every child.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joseph DiGiacomo

Self-Retired

Georgetown, TX

The base allotment be increased to \$7,000.00. Increasing the allotment by \$220.00 is not keeping up with inflation since the last increase.

Full day pre K should be implemented as both parents are working

Special education funding should be increased by \$1B, which is less than the funding level required

Only certified teachers should be hired, or at a minimum, teachers with relevant experience without certification providing that they are working towards certification.

Teachers salaries should be increased

Staff should be teaching rather than administrating. Perhaps this can be accomplished by offering financial incentives to encourage more teaching.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions

Elizabeth Alanis

self

Houston, TX

As an educator, it is important that schools maintain optimal funding to serve our students the best we can. I know that in education it's a numbers game. Let the numbers speak for themselves. If students and teachers are judged based on the number of students that reach masters oon STAAR exams, then the numbers tell you we are failing our students. When Texas is so far behind other students in education, it feels counterintuitive to take funding away from public education. We are already in a teaching crisis in the state with retention very low and more and more teachers taking their retirement early. This is not the environment in which you want to pull the only thing that keeps schools running: funding. It feels unfair to reward private schools that do not have the same standards (attendance, testing, college-readiness) that public schools do, but they are still allowed to receive precious funds earmarked for public education. Do right by your students and your teachers. Do not pass HB2.

Kay Bergen, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

No school vouchers. This has been voted down consistently by Texas voters. Pau attention!

Heather Skalka

Self

Katy, TX

We need an increase of per student funding to go up by at least 1,000 to attempt to keep up with inflation and rising costs. We also need an across the board teacher raise of at least 4,000 to help get more certified teachers in the door and then an additional 2000 for teachers who have been in the profession for 5 years and another 2000 for teachers who have been in the profession for 10 years. The state can do better and 220 per student is a slap in the face per student.

Gail Cronauer, Ms.
self - retired teacher
Dallas, TX

I sent 2 sons through the public school system in Dallas. As an informed and determined parent, my sons went through extraordinary programs - Hotchkiss Montessori and Arts Magnet High School (BTWHSPVA). The education they received was stellar. I live across the street from a DISD elementary school everyday I see students who are not as fortunate as my sons. I drive past expensive private schools and the see students who are have the best education money can buy. I drive around Dallas, I read the papers, I know that most students in public schools - specially inner city and rural - will struggle as adults due to poor education and inadequate resources. I saw those students struggle in the 25 years I taught in Texas Community Colleges. **THE FUTURE OF TEXAS DEPENDS ON INCREASE FUNDING OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.** Increased funding for charter schools will NOT help the majority of Texas students, most of whom live in areas where charter schools don't exist or are less effective than public schools. **FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION.** Likewise, **VOUCHERS ARE NOT A SOLUTION TO EDUCATIONS ISSUES.** **VOUCHERS** will not insure admission to all students. **VOUCHERS** will subsidize wealthy families whose children would attend those schools regardless of vouchers. **VOUCHERS** will NOT HELP the 50% of Texas students who live in an area where decent private school exist. **HB 2 is a thorny path to VOUCHERS. SUPPORT PUBLIC education WITHOUT VOUCHERS!!!**

Sylvia Coulson
self- Dietitian
Waxahachie, TX

I am opposed to this bill as written
First off. I am for school choice. Money with NO strings
I do not like the Teacher Designation Program.
Page 11 creates new programs that I question who will overlook them. Family programs???
The bill also implements mandatory SEL. This should never be included!

The bill also makes the State more dependent upon the Federal Government. Definitely not a good idea.

Lorraine Stehn, Dr
Self
McAllen, TX

Vote No on HB 2. Vouchers will strip our public schools of needed funds. It will most adversely affect our rural school students who wouldn't even have private school options available.

Jesse Coulter
Self
Georgetown, TX

Public Comment Regarding -- HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Mary Schenkel
"self" Retired FNP
Carrollton, TX

My name is Mary Schenkel. I am a retired Family Nurse Practitioner. I worked as a bedside nurse for 20 years and another 20 years for UT Southwestern as an FNP.

I am wanting our legislature to provide our public schools with the same yearly allowance that is provided to parents for private schools. If the private school is getting 10K per student, then the public school should get the same amount.

I also want to see private schools held to the same accountability as the public schools. Republicans are so worried about waste and fraud while they refuse to hold private schools accountable. Private schools should be required to take a percentage of special needs students. If you refuse to do that then the public school funding for these children should be increased.

EVERY child deserves a chance to thrive. It's a shame that the Texas legislature refuses to make our public schools the best in the US. They are more interested in loyalty to their rich Christian nationalist donors.

Texas has the money to have the best public schools in the US. Unfortunately, we don't have the will and motivation to make it happen.

Mary Schenkel

Kelly Griswold
self, parent
Austin, TX

I'm writing to ask that you oppose HB 2 and say no to vouchers. My children's school district is currently in a \$78 million shortfall - without 1350 raise in the basic allotment, our schools will be faced with dire cuts that will have an impact for years to come. My children are in first and kinder - we have a lot of years ahead in the public education system. Texas is a wealthy state and we should be funding our schools appropriately.

Marlene Lobberecht

Self

Houston, TX

TX public schools do not function in a community silo or bubble. You anticipate HB 2 to have amendments. The first one should be to increase the \$220 to \$1220 added to the basic allotment to reverse the damage from last school year and make improvements. Texas public schools are facing the largest financial crisis in Texas history.

Current funding has failed to keep up with inflation and state unfunded mandates. This amount does not provide enough classroom dollars to stop school closures, teacher layoffs, and program cuts. Provide the total funds as the TX Constitutional requires and fund the ESA after TX public schools are fully funded.

Regards,

Marlene Lobberecht

Haley Horan

Self

Houston, TX

Public dollars belong in public schools. Listen to your constituents.

Marcia Jones

self

Houston, TX

We need full funding for our schools! Our children deserve quality curriculum, experienced and passionate teachers, administration that supports teacher needs and campus goals. We have not had an adjustment to the per student allotment since 2016. We know that this is not okay and each student needs more to be successful. We want all kids to succeed, not just those with families that can afford private schools, tutoring and more. We need curriculum that is strong to get our students ready for the future they dream of. We need teachers who are compensated well and work in schools that value their expertise. We need to attract strong educators who are experienced and certified! My children both are not getting the education they deserve because the state has chosen to prioritize politics over doing what is right. Please fully fund our schools!

Yasmin Bhatia

Uplift Education

Dallas, TX

My name is Yasmin Bhatia, and I'm commenting on behalf of Uplift Education. We strongly support HB 2, especially its provisions for public charter school facilities funding.

Statewide, public charter schools receive \$1,600 less per student than traditional districts. This is driven by extremely unequal facilities funding. This forces high-quality, high-performing charter schools to stretch the rest of their budgets to cover facilities costs.

This needs to be addressed. Charter schools are public schools — free to attend and open to all. They provide more high-quality options for families so more children can thrive. We see the positive impact of charter schools in higher rates of career readiness and college enrollment.

All public school students deserve facilities that make them feel safe, proud, and excited to learn. HB 2 will help Texas deliver for children, families, and educators.

Vicki Simons, Ms.

Self - retired

Georgetown, TX

While we are starting to see movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Specifically ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase is insulting; falling far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Gail Tibbetts

none, just my opinion

Georgetown, TX

Though there is some movement in the positive direction, much more needs to be done to dig public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Below are my thoughts.

- Special Education mandates need to be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Hiring uncertified teachers needs to stop, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive. Education is our most important aspect in American Societies. Why is it always such a struggle to pay appropriately for the jobs the teachers perform. I shouldn't have to convince you on how much a proper salary matters.

William Logan Burton

Self and RFISD

ROCKPORT, TX

Please support HB 2 to increase funding for public education. It is nowhere close to what it needs to be but at least it appears to be a start in the right direction. As you know, the BA has remained at the exact same amount of \$6160 since 2019. The proposed BA increase from \$6160 to \$6380 represents a 3.6% increase since 2019. During this same period of time, inflation has averaged 3.6% per year, for an accumulative amount of 23.4%. Over the past 5 years, Texas legislators have pushed more unfunded mandates onto public schools while also raising performance expectations. This demonstrates that Texas legislators actually expect school districts to provide more services, produce better results and yet, do it all with less resources. Its amazing to me that the leaders of our state have not yet addressed this huge public school funding crisis and that it never seems to be anywhere near the priority list. Here are some things that should be considered: Increasing basic allotment sufficiently so that schools can compensate teachers competitively with other professions and help attract more talent; considerations for increased insurance expenses along the Gulf Coast (ie, windstorm), complete restructuring of the finance system including recapture (ie, Robinhood), and Texas needs to stop taking school tax dollars away from tax payers where it is used to fill the state's general fund coffers. School tax dollars should be used on schools.

Eric Trigo

Self teacher

Edinburg, TX

No to discrimination by vouchers!

Kevin Hubbard

Self, Retired

Georgetown, TX

I recommend these improvements to HB2:

1. Increase public school base allotment by \$1,500.
2. Provide fully funded full-day Pre-K for all low-income children as well as the young children of the districts' teachers and staff.
3. Fully fund all Special Education and Safety mandates.
4. Stop hiring uncertified teachers. Significantly improve Texas' competitiveness with other states. Attract the best teachers by ensuring Texas is in top ten of salary and benefits packages.

Sherry Williams

Self

Bay City, TX

I am opposed to using taxpayer money to support private schools. We need to fully fund public schools first. Private schools can pick and choose their students, can deny certain classes and races of people. They do not have the same requirements for certification or transparency in their budgets. I opposed this bill as written and urge our elected officials to increase the funding for public education, not for private schools.

Kristy BAILEY

self - Principal at Brownsboro Elementary School

Brownsboro, TX

I am very thankful for the discussion to increase basic allotment funding as well as the discussion of teacher raises. However, the large amount set aside for Teacher Incentive Allotment is money that could better be used for districts to fund other jobs. With mental health and behavior issues at an all time high, those support positions are needed! Since money will be spent on raises, it won't help with hiring enough staff in these fields to impact the bigger needs of our districts. Please reconsider the priority of Teacher Incentive Allotment, which overall is hard to attain and not the best fit for those of us in rural schools. We could do so much more to help our students and staff with the money that is set aside for TIA!

Jose Trigo
Self teacher
Edinburg, TX

Find our public schools instead of giving welfare to the rich!

Brianna Berry
Self, Human Resource
Austin, TX

Dear Texas Legislator,

As a proud Texan, I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I oppose private school subsidies, also known as vouchers or education savings accounts. I believe private school subsidies are wasteful, deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. The Comptroller is projecting a large increase in state revenue over the next two years compared to the past two years, and that money should go to fully funding public education.

Private schools pick and choose which students to admit. Vouchers force taxpayers to subsidize private schools' preferences. And without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

We elect legislators to represent the interests of their communities. Responding to their communities, Texas legislators have rejected private school subsidies time after time.

In the face of increasing pressure from special interests, I pledge that I will stand with my legislators in opposing vouchers. When they vote against private school subsidies, I will make sure all their constituents know they did the right thing.

Sincerely,
Brianna Berry

Elizabeth Diebold
Self/Retired
Argyle, TX

Please vote no on vouchers. Our tax dollars need to be spent for our public schools. Unlike private schools, our public schools do not pick and choose students, but educate ALL our children. Public schools are the backbone of our society and our future.

Bethany Gabbard
Self. Data Analyst
Austin, TX

Texas doesn't want school vouchers. Our public schools have been underfunded for years - please don't steal more money from public schools to fund this voucher scheme that is profoundly unpopular. Our children deserve better. The data from other states' voucher programs have shown vouchers will just make things worse. Public education is in all Texans' best interests and we need to pull together to help our public schools succeed.

Zenobia C. Joseph, Educational Consultant/Policy Analyst

Self - A+ WRITERS Consulting

Austin, TX

1. Problem: HB 2 is fundamentally disconnected from longitudinal disproportionate racial data in *Breaking Schools' Rules: A [Texas] Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement* (Fabelo, T., et al., 2011).

2. Research: "Of the nearly 1 million students studied, . . . African-American students and those with particular educational disabilities were disproportionately likely to be removed from the classroom for disciplinary reasons" (Fabelo, T., et al., 2011, p. x). March 22, 2024 Austin Chronicle noted, "African American students are doing worse regardless of their economic status" like national state statistics. Bureau of Justice Statistics (1974-2001) noted, "About 1 in 3 black males . . . are expected to go to prison during their lifetime, if current incarceration rates remain unchanged" (p. 1).

3. HB2 Recommendation: Amend Sec. 21.04421. TRADITIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION (Line 9, p. 40/148). Add Title I and K-12 schools with the highest discipline challenges at the local level as a requirement.

3. Justification: As a former Teacher of the Year in Austin, I have a proven track record of exemplary performance in Title I schools under 3 principals in 5 years and, subsequently, as an Educational Consultant. My scholarship on the "I-35 Divide Conundrum" on gifted Black males was published in *Harvard Journal of African-American Public Policy* (2009). Increased pay, alone, will not lead to teacher retention.

a. Testimony: February 10, 2025 Sen. Charles Perry reiterated during Texas Senate Finance Committee Article III Hearing (Public Education) the number one reason teachers leave is discipline with disruptive episodes forcing students to leave the classroom. "There's really no financial incentive for a teacher [to pay \$4K+]. . . . There's no state investment in teacher education," Education Commissioner Mike Morath also noted during the hearing (1:30:22).

b. Anecdote: I witnessed students leave a Del Valle ISD special education classroom when a non-verbal student became aggressive. I had no "IEP" access then later testified for cameras in self-contained SPED rooms, wondering if parents received notice of such disruptions. February 10, 2025 Sen. Brandon Creighton noted policies "let teachers know we have their back, that we're investing in them and will keep a classroom safe[.]" However, HB 2 fails to consider that students who "ain't been taught" (Patton, 2001) may exhibit disciplinary challenges as noted in my Texas Senate Education Testimony June 17, 2008. See <https://senate.texas.gov/cmtes/80/c530/0623-Zenobia-Joseph-1.pdf>

c. Innovative Idea: Create an education-social worker dual degree program. Require all programs (e.g., traditional, alternative certification) to emphasize Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Basic needs must be met to "maintain high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities [Black males, in particular]" (p. 43). Thanks! ~zcj

Dena Praesel

Moms

Round Rock, TX

Please support fundraising bag for public education. I am a single mom with 3 kids in public school. They participate in sports and band which I believe is teaching the important life lessons. Thank you!!

Ali Smith
Self
Houston, TX

I am confident at this point that you are aware of all the reasons for and against these proposals. As a resident of 77079 and a parent of students attending Spring Branch ISD, I ask for you to not pass school choice. At this point, I've reached acceptance that vouchers will pass. Attached to them I would like to see 1) Limits drawn for the program to only apply to students with an annual household income that qualifies them for free/reduced lunch at school. 2) Requirements placed on schools that receive voucher money to mirror many of those required of public school - free and reduced lunch, transportation, discipline policies, curriculum, state testing, no testing to qualify to attend the school, etc. Additionally I would like to see teacher salaries raised significantly where public schools are able to recruit and retain the best. Our ranking as a state in this area is pathetic. The basic allotment for students needs to be raised at least by \$1000 and really to exceed the amount offered in a voucher. If unable to pass basic allotment increases, then immediate and creative ways of sending money to classrooms is urgent.

Alex Goewey, Mr.
Self
Lago vista, TX

Public education and it's funding is more necessary than private education, as private education only relates to the few, not the many.
Though, if both hb 2 & 3 are passed together, HB2 then basically becomes and underhanded way to trick the voters into "allowing" more funding to private education for the few rather than the many.

Regan Zuege
Self
Georgetown, TX

Please please push this bill through! Texas students are counting on you. We are so behind on per pupil spending, and the potential vouchers would make the discrepancy even worse. Thanks for making this a priority. I stand by our public schools!

Ray Pieniasek
Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas
Austin, TX

Please consider raising the basic allotment by more than \$200. If you are giving ESAs 1 billion. You can do better and raise the funds to a more palpable and usable figure like 900 - 1000 dollars

Mary Branam
Self, Director of Pricing
Carrollton, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to school vouchers in Texas. As a concerned citizen and advocate for quality public education, I believe that diverting taxpayer dollars from public schools to fund private education undermines the foundation of our public school system and disproportionately harms Texas students, particularly those in rural and underfunded districts.

Public funds should be invested in strengthening our public schools rather than subsidizing private institutions that are not held to the same accountability standards. Texas public schools serve all students regardless of ability, background, or income, while private schools have the right to deny admission based on various criteria. This creates an inequitable system in which taxpayer money benefits a select few rather than improving educational outcomes for all Texas children.

Additionally, voucher programs have not demonstrated a consistent track record of improving student performance. In states where vouchers have been implemented, studies show that students using vouchers often perform no better—and sometimes worse—than their public school peers. Rather than diverting funds, Texas should focus on increasing teacher salaries, reducing classroom sizes, and providing necessary resources to struggling schools.

Furthermore, rural communities would suffer the most from voucher programs, as they often lack access to private schools. This means that taxpayer dollars from these areas would be funneled away from local public schools without providing an alternative option for families.

I urge you to stand with Texas families, educators, and students by rejecting school voucher proposals and instead working toward policies that genuinely strengthen our public education system. Our students deserve well-funded, equitable, and high-quality public schools, not a system that diverts resources away from them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Janet Huey
Self-former guardian
Houston, TX

I have been connected to Brenham State School since 1977, as a teacher then a guardian. It is an excellent facility, I find it tragic that parents are not told about these Texas facilities. When I taught, there were 520 beds. Today there are less than 300. My guess is that other state schools are in similar situation. Not only are the state schools a wonderful option when care gets beyond parents abilities, they are cost effective than other options. Please be sure and include state schools in parents options.

Diana Briggs
Self
Austin, TX

Another opportunity to get your comment against vouchers on The record .
Please just let go of your ego and do what is obviously the right thing to do:
-No to vouchers or ESA's
-Raise basic allotment to include inflation
-And change funding from attendance to enrollment

Shannon Swoope

Self

Houston, TX

To the Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature,

As we move forward, it is essential to invest in the future of Texas through the funding of public education. Our children are the future workforce, leaders, and innovators of this state, and they deserve an education that equips them with the necessary skills to thrive. The need for strong foundational education in reading, writing, and mathematics has never been more critical for both the success of our students and the strength of our state's economy.

Regular increases in funding to keep pace with inflation are necessary to ensure that our schools remain well-equipped to provide this essential education. This funding will not only help address rising costs in education but will also allow for the continual improvement of teacher salaries, classroom resources, and student support systems. As Texas grows and diversifies, we must ensure our public education system remains resilient, effective, and capable of preparing our students for the challenges of tomorrow.

Investing in education today will yield long-term economic benefits for our state, fueling innovation, attracting businesses, and creating a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of the 21st century. We must prioritize funding for Texas public schools to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to succeed.

We urge the legislature to take immediate and sustained action to support public education funding and ensure that future generations of Texans have the tools they need to succeed.

Alison Bennett

Self

Pearland, TX

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed school voucher program in Texas and its potentially harmful effects on our public school system. As you are well aware, public education plays a vital role in ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, have access to quality education. However, the introduction of a voucher system threatens to undermine the core mission of public schools and exacerbates the funding challenges they already face.

Since 2019, the state of Texas has not increased the allotment per student for public schools, a reality that places immense strain on our already underfunded public education system. According to the Texas Education Agency, public schools are still receiving less financial support per student than many other states, which has led to overcrowded classrooms, cuts in vital services, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. With inflation and rising costs, these conditions only worsen each year. If the state is unwilling to raise per-student funding for public schools, how can it justify diverting precious public funds to support private schools that are already well-funded and may not have the same needs as public schools?

A key issue with the proposed voucher system is the question of where funding will come from for students already enrolled in private schools. Private schools, unlike public schools, are not subject to the same financial pressures or requirements. If public money is directed toward students already attending private schools, there is a real risk that funds will be diverted from public schools, which serve the majority of Texas students, to cover the costs of private education. This will only deepen the financial gap between public and private schools and exacerbate existing inequities in the system.

Additionally, if taxpayer dollars are to be used for private school vouchers, a fundamental question arises: will private schools now be held to the same standards, laws, and accountability measures that public schools are required to follow? Public schools are subject to a wide range of regulations and oversight, including state testing requirements, curriculum standards, and teacher certifications. Public schools must also adhere to anti-discrimination laws, ensuring that all students—regardless of race, gender, disability, or background—have access to a quality education. If private schools are receiving public funds, will they be held to these same standards? Will they be required to comply with the laws that govern public schools to ensure that every student, not just those in certain communities, has access to equitable educational opportunities? I urge you to reconsider the proposed school voucher program.

Jeaneane McNulty

Self - Art Teacher

Austin, TX

Thank you for considering an increase to the basic allotment. However, \$220/student doesn't go nearly far enough - it doesn't even account for inflation since 2019! I don't think it is at all unreasonable or unachievable to consider doubling or even tripling that amount, given the \$24 billion budget surplus we are working with and how far behind we are in funding the schools that serve the VAST majority of Texas students. Lawmakers have neglected our public schools far too long - it's time to make up for it!

In regards the prohibition against schools using districts of innovation law as an exemption from requirements regarding hiring certified teachers and notifying parents about classes taught by uncertified teachers; I am FOR this provision SO LONG AS IT IS APPLIED EQUALLY to state public and public charter schools. It is unfair and confusing to have differing educator requirements for different public school Districts.

In regards to Grant funding for pre-k, fine arts, HS Career advising, I wonder why we must make our public schools jump through hoops to receive funding rather than making this funding available to all schools? All of these programs have more than proven their worth as investments that pay off many times over as students that receive these services succeed in school and the work force. Why not add this money to the basic allotment so that schools have the flexibility to use the money where their community most needs it, without having to expense limited staff resources in order to apply for separate grants? Why are there strings attached?

Sharon Ciccarelli, MA-CCC SLP (Retired)

Self - Speech-Language Pathologist (Retired)

AUSTIN, TX

This is a protest against passage of HB2. As a retired public school speech-language pathologist I know from experience that students with special needs frequently do not receive the services specified in their individualized education plan (IEP) once they leave the public system.

I frequently had families transfer to a private/charter school that promised some service that their neighborhood school could not provide due to lack of funding. Most often this was an after-school program; our parents worked long hours typically at low-paying jobs and needed a safe place for their child until they were off for the day. I made sure each family had multiple copies of the child's current evaluation and IEP so that they could provide them to the new school at enrollment for continuation of services. Many, many times I would later see those parents and hear how their child was either not receiving services at all or at a reduced frequency for their educational needs. Often those minimal services were not being provided by licensed and certified personnel.

Voucher programs have been tried in other states with less than stellar results. Graduation rates and test scores do not go up. Businesses in those states report difficulties in finding qualified job candidates. Let's learn from their experiences and take a better path.

The governor's obsession with school vouchers is merely another gift to his wealthy friends and funders paid for by hard-working people. Although he claims that students with special needs will have "voucher priority" the reality is that private/charter schools do not have to meet the stringent standards for special education that public schools do and students will be the ones to suffer. Texans most certainly know a con job when they see one and this one does not even require glasses!

Use our tax money to fully fund our public school systems so that they can hire the best teachers and licensed and certified support personnel, build and maintain up-to-date facilities, provide necessary materials and maybe provide "extras" like afterschool programs that will actually support working Texas families. Doing so will provide all Texas children, not just those with wealthy parents, access to the very best education we can offer.

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

Resource campus pilots with the extra funding. Similar to Ft. Worth and Dallas models discussed. Mr. Choudry's model.

Nicholas Joseph
self, Engineer
Austin, TX

I am writing on HB 2 to the committee to increase the basic allotment beyond what is currently in this bill. School districts all across the state, urban and rural, are facing historic budget deficits that are causing them to have to cut services. The state of Texas is already woefully behind other states in terms of funding education, and this bill doesn't get us close to catching up with where we were in 2019. Too much of the money allocated is for special programs dictated by the state government, when local school districts will know best what their needs are. Please put most of the money allocated in this bill towards increasing the basic allotment. That is the best way to make sure our Texas public schools, have what they need to educate so many kids all across the state. Why can't Texas have best in the nation public education? The only thing preventing it is the inaction of this committee. Parents are doing our job getting our kids to school, kids are doing their job learning, teachers are doing their job teaching - its time for the legislature to do its job and give Texas public schools the funding they need.

Craig Campbell
Retired self
Austin, TX

What will be the impact of the end the US Department of Education for School Districts?

Naveen Nattam
Self
Austin, TX

While increasing teacher pay is good, tying it to test scores it not going to be effective and I cannot support public funds going to charter schools through vouchers. This will pull money from public schools for private schools. and is unacceptable.

Sean Hesterly

self

Katy, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2. I have serious concerns regarding the potential negative impacts of this legislation on the Texas education system and its long-term stability.

Firstly, I am deeply worried about the potential for HB 2 to exacerbate the existing financial strain on the Texas Retirement System (TRS). Diverting significant public funds to private school vouchers, as proposed, could further destabilize TRS, jeopardizing the retirement security of our dedicated public school teachers. This is a critical issue that must be addressed with utmost caution.

Secondly, the bill's lack of robust accountability measures for private schools raises significant concerns. The absence of mandatory state testing for private schools receiving public funds creates a critical gap in transparency and student performance tracking. Without standardized assessments, we cannot ensure that these schools are providing a quality education that meets the needs of Texas students. Furthermore, the lack of credential requirements for private school teachers leaves the door open to potentially unqualified individuals instructing our children. This is a fundamental issue of educational quality and student safety.

Finally, while I understand the intent behind expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), I am concerned that the current structure under HB 2 will not provide equitable support to all teachers. The TIA's focus on select teachers within a district risks creating a tiered system that leaves many dedicated educators behind, particularly those working in challenging environments or with underserved populations. A truly effective teacher support system must be comprehensive and inclusive, benefiting all those who dedicate their lives to educating Texas students.

In conclusion, I urge the legislature to reconsider HB 2. The potential for financial instability within TRS, the lack of accountability for private schools, and the uneven distribution of teacher support are critical flaws that must be addressed. I believe that our focus should remain on strengthening our public school system, ensuring quality education for all Texas children, and providing equitable support to all our dedicated educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Martha Aleman

Self, public high school teacher

Abilene, TX

Support public school. Teachers are doing a good job, we need more support and funding. We are the backbone to Texas communities.

Anastasia Bowley

Self

Austin, TX

As a public school parent and a former teacher, I am writing to say that HB 2 does not do enough to support Texan teachers and students. Raises for the per-student allotment should be spent on students. Districts should be able to decide whether money would go to supplies, staff, or facilities. Mandating that 40% go to teacher pay means making a grand gesture with paltry outcomes. What's more, if increases in the per-student allotment are tied to test scores, our most struggling schools will only continue to suffer with inexperienced teachers or poor performing teachers, outdated facilities, and inadequate curricular resources. Please amend this bill to fund public education for ALL Texas students. We need something better than HB 2.

Amy Keane
self, semi retired teacher
Austin, TX

Subject: Opposition to HB2 – Insufficient Funding for Public Schools

Dear Legislators,

I strongly oppose HB2 because it fails to adequately fund Texas public schools. High-quality education for our children depends on attracting and retaining experienced, certified teachers, and that requires competitive salaries. However, the bill's proposed increase of only \$220 per student in the basic allotment falls far short of the \$1,340 needed just to keep up with inflation.

As a retired Texas educator with nearly 30 years of experience, I mentored many first-year teachers. One of the most rewarding parts of my career was guiding young educators through the coaching cycle—planning, modeling, co-teaching, observing, and debriefing. However, I was sadly disappointed each time I saw a teacher who had made so much progress leave the profession. Without proper funding, Texas risks losing more talented educators to higher-paying opportunities elsewhere.

If we want our children to receive the high-quality education they deserve, we must invest in our public school teachers. I urge you to reject HB2 in its current form and prioritize meaningful increases in school funding. A far better funding bill is HB1257 by Bryant.

Falba Turner, Mrs.
Self
Austin, TX

I do not support the voucher bill for four reasons: taxation without representation; fiscal irresponsibility and lack of transparency; further disadvantage for the critical role of public education; and funding unhealthy motives for parents choosing private school. As a Catholic, I feel the most unconscionable part of the bill is the low threshold for eligibility, allowing clearly affluent people to take advantage of the free money. At the very least, please, please, please raise the bar so that genuinely low-income people are the only eligible families.

Deyanira Thomas
SELF/ teacher
Deer Park, TX

I stand with Texas public schools and vote NO to vouchers. Our students and community deserve fundings to provide a better education. Our children are the future and they deserve good quality education that can be achieved with fundings. Please continue funding our public schools. Our public school kids also deserve a good and affordable education.

Deyanira Thomas
Self teacher
Deer Park, TX

I stand with Texas public schools and vote NO to vouchers. Our students and community deserve fundings to provide a better education. Our children are the future and they deserve good quality education that can be achieved with fundings. Please continue funding our public schools. Our public school kids also deserve a good and affordable education.

Anastasia Bowley

Self

Austin, TX

All Texas students deserve a well-funded education provided by parties legally bound to high, evidence-based standards. Regardless of income, ability, diagnosis, or academic history, every Texas child should have good choices that include well-funded public schools. Promoting vouchers undercuts public schools' ability to compete with nearby private schools who, in addition to charging tuition, will receive a "bonus" per-student allotment. Please assure that all families can confidently provide their students with a high quality education proudly enacted by well-regarded teachers trained to teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in their content area and fairly compensated for their work. HB 3 does not improve educational options for all Texans. It is a boon to those who can already afford private school tuition and it saddles public schools with the impossible task of providing high quality education and instruction to all kinds of students who private schools can refuse admission. I urge you to do better for our students and vote against HB3.

Katherine Dombrowski

Self / Chemical Engineer

Austin, TX

The proposed increase of \$220 per student is paltry and comes nowhere near making up for 6 years of inflation, nor does it make up for the recent unfunded mandates (e.g., security at all campuses). For that, we need over \$1000 per student. And still that is not enough to make Texas public schools competitive on a national and global stage. Texas students need to be well educated so that they can drive the economic engine of Texas. Texas schools need to be well funded so that we have strong economically vibrant communities. Texas teachers need to be well funded so that we can attract the best talent and reward them for one of the most challenging jobs in our economy.

Erika Licari

Dyslexia therapist/ teacher in public school

Fort Worth, TX

Please increase funding for special education.

Jeanette ODell

self, retired

Austin, TX

It is being said that The Governor will not fully fund our schools unless our Legislature passes a voucher bill. Our children, teachers and local communities deserve to not have the funding of our state education held hostage to the voucher bill. The committee should not be considering creating an entirely new infrastructure for a \$5 billion program which most Texans don't want until they have fully funded our public schools.

Krutina Garcia

Self

Manvel, TX

Fund special education based on actual services needed for each kid.

Alicea Townsend

Parent

Houston., TX

The House Public Education meets Thursday, March 6 to hear HB 2, which will be the key opportunity in the House to improve special education funding. Use the 1-click link below to ask them to increase special education funding: “Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education.” If you can, personalize with something like “In my district, insufficient special education funds cause [denied or delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention, etc].”

You only need a few sentences to make a difference!

Please submit comments between now and 3pm Thursday bc link expires at the end of the committee meeting.

<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?>

#txlege #txed #HB1 #HB2 #SB1 #SB568

Michelle Burkel

Self

Eustace, TX

With dyslexia falling under special education now, there needs to be more funding for our students receiving and teachers providing specially designed instruction to students who receive pull-out/resource/dyslexia minutes as part of their schedule of services. Our special population is growing by the day with the way the guidelines were changed in the 2024 Dyslexia Handbook. More funding is needed to support our special education students and staff.

Stacey Moore

Self

Spring, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, and a lack of effective dyslexia interventions.

Michelle Yoder

self

Houston, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, SBISD, insufficient special education funds cause delayed evaluations by years and lack of effective dyslexia intervention.

Melissa Carrasco

Self

Helotes, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students.

Kimberly Haase
Self
League City, TX

As an educator, this bill scares me. There are already teachers leaving the profession at alarming rates. This bill shows a complete lack of respect for public education and those who are a part of it. We are unfortunately used to being disrespected, but, to have it be from the people we elected to have our best interest in mind? That's disheartening. Why not put money into improving the public school system? Why not invest in us?

Cori Cane, Mrs.
Self-public educator
Princeton, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause insufficient amount of dyslexia therapists to provide critical intervention for our dyslexic students, delayed evaluations (which means delays in getting kids the extra support they so desperately need, and a lack of appropriate staffing to close the gaps for our special education students. Thank you for your consideration in this matter! Our children deserve better!

Melissa Gibbs
Self
Winnie, TX

We are in need of more funds. Not having enough funds is hard. We can not hire the right amount of teachers to meet the need of our growing sped population. Please consider more funding. Thanks

Heather Chapman
Self and son who has dyslexia
Buda, TX

Please fix the special education penalty. As an educator and parent of a child with dyslexia it is a struggle to meet the needs of students who deserve extra support due to the lack of funding.

Lauren Smith, Mrs.

Self, Educator

Lubbock, TX

Advocating for National Board Certified Teachers Under TIA

My name is Lauren Smith, a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) with 11 years of teaching experience in Lubbock. I advocate for recognizing NBCTs under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) and honoring our contributions to Texas classrooms. I would also like for NBCTs to be considered for a higher level of TIA.

My Journey to National Board Certification

Becoming an NBCT was a rigorous, transformative process spanning over two and a half years. I engaged in research-based strategies, analyzed student growth, built community networks, and pursued continuous professional development. This certification—widely considered more demanding than a master’s degree—ensures the highest instructional quality for students.

Since certification, I have served as a team leader, campus leadership team member, technology leader, content presenter, NBCT mentor, professional learning facilitator, and recipient of multiple teaching excellence awards. Like me, NBCTs across Texas exemplify dedication and deserve top recognition under TIA.

Why NBCTs Deserve Recognition Under TIA

Commitment to Excellence and Professional Growth

NBCTs master content, pedagogy, and self-reflection while applying research-based strategies.

Certification requires expertise in four areas: content knowledge, differentiated instruction, teaching practice, and reflective teaching.

NBCTs mentor, lead curriculum development, and serve as instructional coaches, fostering excellence statewide.

Proven Impact on Student Achievement

Research shows students of NBCTs gain 1-2 months of additional learning growth.

NBCTs enhance engagement, learning strategies, and academic achievement.

Supporting National Board Certification strengthens Texas student success.

Retaining Highly-Qualified Educators

Texas faces a teacher retention crisis due to financial constraints and lack of recognition.

TIA has helped many NBCTs, including myself, remain in the classroom. Without it, some may leave for higher-paying opportunities.

A Lifelong Commitment to Growth

NBCTs undergo rigorous renewal every five years, ensuring ongoing improvement and best practices.

Like doctors and lawyers, NBCTs maintain the highest standards for student success.

NBCT Incentives in Other States

Many states provide financial incentives for NBCTs, including:

Mississippi: \$6,000 annual increase

South Carolina: \$5,000 annual stipend

Georgia: 10% salary supplement

Alabama, Oklahoma: \$5,000 annual bonus

Tennessee: \$3,000 annual bonus

Kentucky: \$2,000 annual stipend

A Call to Action: Keep NBCTs in TIA

I urge you to support NBCTs by ensuring we remain in TIA and advocating for higher designation levels and across-the-board teacher pay raises. Recognizing and rewarding accomplished educators ensures Texas students receive the highest-quality education.

Cathy Morgan

self/retired Texas teacher

Austin, TX

To the House Public Education Committee:

I am a native Texan, a product of Texas public schools, a retired public school teacher with 29 years of teaching, a taxpayer, a mother and grandmother of children who attended Texas public schools, and a very strong supporter of our public schools.

The Texas Constitution states "it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools."

Funding our public schools is a priority. We are now 43rd in the nation in what we spend per pupil and that is truly outrageous.

The state has the money to provide public schools with funds that meet students' needs, that provide teachers with well-deserved pay raises, and allows school districts to plan for future students. In many of our rural Texas towns, the public school is the main employer and the center of many of their activities. Few, if any, small towns have private schools.

Fully funding a robust public education for our children must be enacted before any consideration of the topic of Vouchers. The only situation in which Vouchers should be considered is if all schools, private or public, are required to fully provide for the needs of any and every child.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cathy Morgan

Deanna Cupero, Dyslexia therapist

Self

San Antonio, TX

To the Texas House, I implore you to make the right choice for the education of our children in Texas and vote no to school vouchers. The lack of funding since 2019 to the basic allotment is unjust and reprehensible as you know all know inflation and the cost of everything needed to educate children has increased in price just like all the products and groceries that we buy personally. It is sad that Gov. Abbott has held the surplus money as ransom to get his way in this area. What a shame! I ask for your support in helping improve special education. Please vote to increase special education funding: Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds has caused inadequate staffing causing special education staff to be overwhelmed and overworked educators ,serving 20-30 students, students don't truly receive the proper number of specialized minutes due to a lack of staff and not enough support staff. We are working hard in our district to offer dyslexic students top notch dyslexia therapy, but with no funding to continue training teachers and buy the curriculum books needed in a timely manner. Please don't let students suffer any more. Cut back on the useless spending on standardized tests, but not real students with real needs.

Jamie Shanahan

Self

Austin, TX

Reaching out as a mother of 2 boys, ages 3 and 1, that I intend to send to AISD. I graduated from the nearby RRISD and am proud of that education. I went on to study nursing and later get my masters degree at the University of Texas at Austin. So my love of public Texas education runs deep. By giving the funding for public schools to the minority of parents who can and do choose private schools, you are taking a huge hit on the fundamentals of our society. Access to education is something all children should have. This includes children who live in rural settings where private schools are not accessible, children whose parents cannot afford the remainder of the private school tuition beyond the voucher, and to children with disabilities whose needs may not be appropriately supported at a private school. Please continue to prioritize high quality education for the majority of Texas students, not putting money into the pockets of the rich.

Kira McAhren

Independant

Converse, TX

Thank you for advocating for our students at ground level. We so much need the help! It can be overwhelming at times.

Megan Dear

Self/Parent

Austin, TX

While I agree that our teachers desperately need an increase in their pay, it is not nearly enough, and too closely tied to TIA. Merit-based awards put an over emphasis on standardized testing, which is already problematic for really gauging the performance of a school. I also have concerns on how the reorganization of charter school payments will increase their funds. This is an area that needs much more oversight before handing over more money.

Cristi McAnelly

Self

Buda, TX

Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. I am a special education paraprofessional and have seen & felt the inequity first hand. We have 23 special education positions open in our district and a large part of those vacancies are due to lack of resources and funding. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause delayed evaluations, inadequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention, etc. The ones that are hurting the most are the children. The majority of my class are nonverbal so I ask that you help me & advocate for them.

Kristen Chambliss

Self; psychologist

League City, TX

In my district, insufficient special education funds cause inadequate staffing for special education students and programs serving students with autism and dyslexia continue to be cut. As a mother of an autistic child and a child who is dyslexic, the importance of special education services cannot be understated. Investing in our children now prevents them from being dependent on state and federal government programs later as adults. Please support public schools where all children can attend, make them safer, and invest in public education. We value the educators who have helped our daughters this year, and they deserve fair compensation. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Jamie Avalos
self
Fort Worth, TX

My name is Jamie Avalos. Since 2011 I have been a high school teacher in Texas. I would like to share my thoughts on HB2 based on my experience with students from working-class families, both urban and rural. In the past decade, teacher attrition has risen while the number of highly-qualified hires has declined. This turnover negatively impacts students and wastes tax dollars. HB2 includes some measures to address this, including increasing the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), but more is needed for teachers to stay and work in schools with the greatest need.

Districts implementing TIA rely heavily on test scores to determine teacher effectiveness, but this creates barriers for many of those working with our highest-need students, such as those in dual-language and special education—areas already facing critical teacher shortages. Other criteria for qualifying can be difficult to monitor accurately, such as with teacher evaluations, where evaluators have little to no oversight and the data is not public. In my experience, accurate teacher evaluations are not prioritized in struggling schools. I have had evaluators who assigned identical scores and feedback to all teachers, and I have had administrators fail to complete evaluations entirely. With financial incentives on the table, some evaluators may tip the scales to earn more money for their schools. Furthermore, evaluator bias and ineligibility to receive TIA may make many more teachers quit the profession.

For TIA to be effective, teachers need more pathways to TIA. Universal eligibility for teachers is key. In my district of Fort Worth ISD, physics teachers like me still do not qualify. I just recently achieved Recognized status through the National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) program—a rigorous process requiring 3 separate portfolios of data, analysis and reflection of my teaching along with a content exam. But now I am devastated to learn that this status is on the chopping block. Despite their prestige of being among the top 3% of teachers in the nation, NBC teachers may now be at a bottom tier of TIA or lose their status entirely if changes to HB2 are not made.

Please consider promoting the NBCT program in Texas. Research supports the positive effects of NBCTs, especially with hard to reach students. Not only do NBCTs add value to schools, but there is a growing body of evidence that teachers completing NBCT certification move up to higher levels of TIA designations in participating districts. NBC teachers make up only about 1% of Texas teachers, but if this program were promoted through TIA, it could make a substantial impact on our schools. It is a fair, cost-effective system that can be accessed by any teacher in Texas. National Board Certified Teachers are exceptional educators and should be considered a higher status.

By improving recognition and incentive programs, Texas can build a stronger, more sustainable education system that benefits both educators and students.

Kelsey Allen-Gassen
Katy dyslexia, ADHD, learning disability, literacy coalition
Fulshear, TX

“Please close the \$1.7 billion annual special education spending gap, adopt a better method of distributing special education funds to schools, and end the disability penalty that causes schools to lose half of their Basic Allotment general education funds for most students served by special education. In my district, insufficient special education funds cause denied or delayed evaluations, an adequate staffing, lack of effective dyslexia intervention and students being dismissed from dyslexia intervention before they are reading at grade level because of the lack of funding.

Kelvin Doe
Self Teacher
San Antonio, TX

As a Teacher at a Title 1 school and school district it is obvious to see that our schools are underfunded. From the overworked SPED teachers, to the lack of infrastructure, it is so hard to watch so many problems in our schools that can be fixed or at least addressed with the addition of more money.

Joni Bumgarner, Mrs

Self Mother

Austin, TX

No vouchers

Raise basic allotment \$1300

And fund public schools based on enrollment not attendance

I oppose Texas voucher bills, as they take vital resources away from public schools. Instead, we should increase the basic allotment for public schools and fund them based on student enrollment, not attendance. Funding should follow the students, ensuring schools have the stability and resources needed to educate every child, regardless of attendance challenges. Let's invest in public education, not undermine it with vouchers.

Joyce Evans

Self

Cypress, TX

Hi, good morning I am a mom of three and the Texas public education system. I am very concerned about the voucher program, it truly does not make sense to help the majority of students in the state of Texas. I'm no mathematician but spending \$1 billion for only servicing 100,000 students in such a large state makes no sense. I am a parent and I do have a choice I could go move out of my school district. I could find a school that has an open campus to move my children. If our governor truly wanted a choice opportunity for the state of Texas, they would create choice schools like they have in Florida. There are public school, Montessori schools, public school, art schools, public school, theater schools, public school, stem schools, public school robotics. These schools run on a lottery system parents choose to apply to the schools that are public schools and they could get in. This would service the mass majority of students in Texas verse only a tiny portion for that much money. my children's school district this year alone had to fire amazing teachers because of lack of funding, kids are walking in dangerous conditions, and freezing temperature in hundred degree temperature when school first began because of lack of funding. CFISD in the Cypress area of Houston closed libraries full-time! How does a school district in Texas truly think that this is a good idea? Literacy should be top of mind for schools and school districts not for moving it and the awesome programs that come along with it. Texas should be pumping money into schools because this is the future. rather than our governor bashing public schools, check it out on his Facebook page. He should find ways to improve it. Our governor's wife is on the board of a private school. This seems very self-serving and a huge conflict of interest. Please feel free to reach out. I would love to speak on behalf of Texas parents, even my daughter feels the same and she's a high school student and she would gladly speak as well. Thank you so much for your time. Have a great day.

Nancy Burke

Educator, Parent- tax payer

Friendswood, TX

I oppose any voucher bill. raise the money for every student in public schools. You have neglected this for years. Teachers deserve a GOOD pay raise and retirement needs to be adjusted as well. We have fallen to lowest in pay, funding and now academics because you have neglected education. NO VOUCHERS- fund the schools.

lisa Connor

Connor Pool Service LLC

Fort Worth, TX

As homeschooling parents, we would like homeschoolers in Tx to remain truly free. Please vote "no" on attaching more government strings to homeschool education through this bill. Instead, lower property taxes. Let people decide how best to spend their own money. It would be way more efficient and real freedom for everyone.

Sincerely,

Lisa Connor

Alyson Palermo
Chosen Homeschool Group
Windcrest, TX

I am against any government funding for private education including private schools and homeschools. If the government uses tax payer money for any reason, it has an obligation to make sure the funds are being used well which means the government would need to add regulations to how private education functions. We currently are free and without the hinderance of government regulation. Please don't take away my freedom to educate my children in the way that best benefits each of them as individuals.

Julia Backus
Public Education
Waxahachie, TX

Continue to fund public education to the maximum extent possible. This is not political party debate. It is a fight to insure that each and every child is allowed to receive a free and appropriate public education free from prejudice and bigotry. This is the future not only of Texas but of the United States of America. Do not hurt nor harm the very communities you have been "hired" to represent. This is your charge so do your job and represent your people not the billionaires!

Jennifer StrawnWhite
Self
Keller, TX

I am commenting regarding the Education Committee hearing for House Bill 3 on Tuesday. As a Texas homeschool parent for the past 17 years, I value freedom from government strings and regulations in private education, and am against the expansion of government in the name of "parental empowerment." I would like to ask this committee to please join a LARGE constituency of homeschoolers in opposing "school choice" legislation like HB 3. Thank you!

Amanda Utter
Amanda Utter VO
Austin Travis, TX

I'm a Texas voter, wife to a special education public school teacher, and parent to two public school educated children. Say no to vouchers and fully fund our public schools!

Craig Campbell
Retired self
Austin, TX

Basic allotment steps. By setting a goal of 2019 funding with two or three steps over the next two sessions. Each step could be \$433 a session, holding for inflation. Mapping out a plan will allow for educators and systems to implement long-range improvements thoughtfully.

Caroline Koverman, RN
Self
austin, TX

Please protect public education in Texas! I am proud to be raising a daughter who is thriving in our public school! She and her classmates deserve in increasement in per student allotment greater than what is proposed.
Thank you.

Megan Hill
Self
Harker Heights, TX

Children with disabilities cannot become productive members of society without support you pay for it now or you pay for it later please support our children

Denise Luera
self
El Paso, TX

Taxpayers should benefit from the services our hard-earned money pays for, including education. If the public education system fails us, we should have the right to send our tax dollars to an institution that will meet our educational needs. I fully support this bill and am proud of our political leaders for listening to their constituents in drafting the HB2 bill. Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Vanderkolk
Self
Austin, TX

I oppose school vouchers in Texas argue because they divert public funds from already under-resourced public schools, potentially weakening the public education system. Vouchers may not truly expand educational opportunities for low-income families and might exacerbate inequities, and that private schools accepting voucher students may lack adequate accountability and transparency. Additionally, I have concerns about potential constitutional issues, like the separation of church and state, if vouchers support religious private schools.

Brian Hochman, Dr.
Self
Leander, TX

I am writing to defend the integrity of the public school system. As a graduate of public schools I excelled and progressed and graduated medical school and now have the ability to assist those in need. The public school system is home to a diverse group of students, teachers, personalities, religion, and even political viewpoints. Without this diversity, the benefits of education are greatly limited. Creating a voucher system not only works to defund the public schools, it will reduce the economic and cultural diversity of individuals in the public school systems. The public school are a better representation of how our great nation is outside the local education system.

All students should have equal opportunity to a robust and thriving public education system. It is time to fully fund the public education system and show this great state that we can be #1 in education instead of the bottom 30%. For all the opportunity that Texas has, it is a disgrace that we can not compete with the public education systems in the rest of our country. Instead of stripping the system of opportunity and money we should be finding out what other states are doing and begin to enact change. The time to act is now. This is not the time to run away and abandon the public school system.

Tax payers expect there taxes to stay local. A great school district reduces crime, increases property value, and leads to a better local workforce. How do taxpayers benefit by sending kids out of the community?

I urge Texas to rethink this decision. I urge Texas to have a bigger focus on education and move to be the most powerful, robust, and well rounded education system in the country and in the world. Private vouchers will not accomplish widespread lasting change. It will take away from a system that needs more bipartisan support.

Sincerely,
Dr. Brian Hochman

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

The basic allotment should be at least the national average of states.

Craig Campbell

Retired self

Austin, TX

As an immediate goal, we should increase support for the national average for all states. In the long term, Texas should be the leader in support for education. We are the 8th largest economy in the world. Do other states care for their children more? We need to be proud of Texas because of our valuing education. Being number one in football is a worthy goal, but we should also aspire to be number one in education.

Mary Franzosa

Self Architect

Austin, TX

I do not support vouchers or ESA's. The basic allotment for each child should be raised to include inflation. Change funding from attendance to enrollment.

Dorothy Fontanella

Self/retired

Georgetown, TX

HB2 - Public School Funding

While we are starting to see movement in a positive direction, much more needs to be done to help public school districts out of the financial hole created by the state freezing funding during a 5-year historic period of inflation. Such as ---

- HB2 provides for an increase in the base allotment of \$220, with the resulting base allotment at \$6380. This increase falls far below the \$1500 needed to recover from the impact of inflation over the last 5 years.
- Special Education mandates must be fully funded. Currently special education expenses across Texas are roughly \$2B OVER the amount the funding level provided by the state. This really cannot be ignored any longer.
- Safety mandates must be fully funded. If the safety measures mandated by the state are warranted, then they need to be fully funded.
- Free full-day Pre-K is required for all low-income children as well as the young children of our districts' staff. If we are to recruit highly qualified teachers, this benefit is required to be competitive.
- Along with performance-based bonuses every year, the starting salaries must be increased if we are going to have any success in drawing college graduates into the teaching profession in Texas.
- Finally, hiring uncertified teachers needs to be stopped, particularly in core subject areas. That will happen only when the salary and benefits package for teachers in Texas becomes more competitive.

Megan Gray, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

As a parent and community pediatrician, I so value high quality public schools as partners in our children's and our community's future.

I firmly oppose school vouchers.

Three things we want to communicate.

- No to vouchers or ESA's
- Raise basic allotment to include inflation
- And change fund8ng from attendance to enrollment

DeeDee Haralson

Self

Cibolo, TX

Dear Texas House Committee on Public Education,

I would like to take a moment to address the topics of teacher incentive allotment, teacher raises, and pay for uncertified teachers. The teacher incentive allotment has a commendable premise; however, it fails to recognize the significant contributions of all educators. While the intention is to retain excellent teachers in the classroom, it is essential to acknowledge that skilled teachers are also needed in various other capacities. As an academic trainer for the Judson ISD school district in San Antonio, my position does not qualify for the teacher incentive allotment since I do not have a class assigned to me. I urge the committee to consider the crucial roles that accomplished teachers play in supporting those who are directly in the classroom. Having been a successful classroom teacher, I now dedicate my efforts to training and coaching current classroom educators. It raises the question of fairness: how is it just that a teacher I mentor can receive monetary incentives potentially derived from my expertise, while I do not receive any compensation for my contributions?

Additionally, there are teachers who provide enrichment and gifted and talented services within our district, yet they too do not have a designated class to qualify for the incentive allotment. I encourage you to explore ways to incentivize teachers in all roles who play a part in fostering student growth.

Every teacher deserves a raise. No profession can thrive without the foundational work of educators, yet we often receive some of the lowest pay relative to our workloads.

Moreover, our district employs numerous uncertified teachers, many of whom are compensated at rates comparable to mine, despite my twenty years of experience. A first-year teacher, who lacks certification, is only receiving \$7,120 less than a veteran teacher of twenty years. They are currently undertaking their preparation program but have not yet achieved certification. It begs the question: why are they compensated similarly to certified teachers who have completed their preparation programs?

As you know, it takes a village to raise a child, and it also takes a collective effort to ensure academic growth for students. This endeavor involves parents and families, district personnel, campus administration, teachers, mentors and coaches, custodians, cafeteria workers, the students themselves, and more.

I believe the committee has the opportunity to devise a robust plan that guarantees substantial raises for all teachers while ensuring fairness in compensation and incentives across Texas.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

DeeDee Haralson

Brian Masel, Dr.

Self

Galveston, TX

- No to vouchers or ESA's
- Raise basic allotment to include inflation
- Change funding from attendance to enrollment

julianna simon

self

austin, TX

As parents and community members, our public school are an invaluable resource. Zilker elementary has given my child not only practical tangible skills (she's testing ahead of grade level expectation in every subject), but also a community of friends and social network that has given her resilience and courage. Public school is crucial - unlike a private school, public schools are accountable to the communities they serve. They support our neighborhoods in becoming stronger, more attractive homes for highly skilled workers and they connect us to our future as well as our past. As we celebrate Zilker's 75th anniversary this spring, and talk about what my daughter is placing in their time capsule to be opened in 25 years - my daughter gets a sense for how deeply her experiences tie her to the community around her. Please fund our public schools. Give them more money to enrich our children's minds and strengthen the communities around us. This investment pays back - well educated children are less likely to fall into poverty or crime, more likely to be healthy and strong (and less burden on our medical system), and families are more well connected to resources that strengthen all of us. If you believe in Texas, you have to believe in our youth - and every dollar that we reinvest into the public school system ensures that no child falls through the cracks, and every family has access to the resources, benefits, and value that education brings to all of us.

Karla Lopez Bray

Self

Austin, TX

Please fund public education first. Say no to school vouchers!

Shelley Koliba

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no for the vouchers. Can we try fully funding public schools? Can we use our surplus to not be one of the lowest states with regard to education? Can we try to fix the system so that all Texas children have access to quality public education? I think we all want an educated group of young people... not just the wealthy.

Nina Martinez

Self software developer

San Antonio, TX

Please properly fund our public schools. Public schools need a \$1,340 per student increase to account for inflation. I am a proud NEISD alumni and my family has been in Texas since the 1700s. I want the same quality education for my child that I was given. Please increase public school funding.

Abby Moon, RN

Self

San Antonio, TX

Our teachers are one the hardest working of group of individuals. They deserve to have the proper funding and proper pay to ensure they are able to educate their students. Let's not forget that they are educating our children. They are tirelessly serving our children despite the lack of funding and well deserved pay increases.

In regards to the school choice bill, essentially the school voucher bill, students already have choice in Texas. What they do not need is for money to be taken away from public schools and diverted to private schools.

The amount per student

Margarita Mintzer

Self

Austin, TX

Say no to Vouchers, increase basic allotment by \$1300, and change funding from attendance to enrollment.

Kay Pruett, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

Opposed.

Leslie Hall

self / parent

AUSTIN, TX

I have a third and a fourth grader in a Texas Title 1 public school, and I am deeply concerned about the resources available for their education. When they entered public school five years ago, the buying power of the state's basic allotment was more than 20% higher than it is today. It is absolutely wild that we do not adjust this allotment for inflation, as though the costs to educate our kids and pay our teachers exist in some different economy, immune to price changes. How does this make sense?

Every single year since my kids entered kindergarten, we have seen the district forced to cut staff and programs, and the school economize in every way possible, as student needs and state mandates have only grown. This year, the school PTA has increased its spending by half, funding almost \$100,000 in basic expenses like classroom supplies, books, training for new teachers, and literacy curriculum. What is happening at schools that don't have these private resources? How is this okay?

We are blessed to have outstanding school leadership, dedicated staff, and enough generous families that we have made do--but it is grinding us down. People are giving up. Teachers and staff are being driven out because their wages aren't keeping up with the cost of living. Last year, a beloved and incredibly effective first-grade teacher was one of our many staff who needed to work a second job to make ends meet. She got the JuiceLand location where she served smoothies to run a fundraiser for our students. This year, she has left the profession. Why are we letting this happen?

Our economy is one of the biggest in the world. Colleges and businesses all over the country come here to recruit their next generation of talent. Our public schools should be exceptional! As a parent and a 6th-generation Texan, I ask you to please provide them the level of financial support we decided was necessary in 2019--or better yet, the level of funding for schools before the \$5 billion cut in 2009. Our kids deserve it. Our economy depends on it. It's the right thing to do.

Abigail Forney, Mrs.

self

Helotes, TX

I strongly support closing the funding gap for special education and changing the SPED funding formula so that we aren't in this situation in a few years! My 4th grader was recently identified as dyslexic, and although she is getting specialty designed instruction for dyslexia at her school, the school is loosely interpreting fidelity to the dyslexia program's requirements for minutes of instruction per week, relying on a loophole in the Dyslexia Handbook that mandates fidelity to the program's descriptors (I'd be glad to explain this loophole in detail). The district's interpretation seems to be influenced by a lack of resources (enough trained staff to provide the special education minutes to all the students who qualify). Please don't put my school between a rock and a hard place where they are trying to give special education students the intensity of support they require and but can't hire and fund enough staff to do so.

Moreover I want you to understand that prior to moving to our current traditional neighborhood school, my daughter was at a well-regarded public charter school that failed to test her for a specific learning disability, despite the school's benchmark testing of basic reading skills showing that she was Well Below expectations each year for 4 years and despite the school placing her in reading intervention for years. The school justified the lack of action because her class grades were As and Bs and another test of reading *comprehension* were not yet "low enough" to prompt testing. This is not appropriate, and strongly believe that the district was broadly interpreting their mandate to test my daughter because they were trying to avoid the cost associated with full disability testing as well as the potential cost of providing SPED/dyslexia services. My daughter's mental health suffered as a result of the delayed dyslexia identification; she was diagnosed with depression in 3rd grade. This whole experience has been tragic and didn't need to happen! Close the SPED funding gap so that schools don't to make Sophie's Choice with their students!

Robbie Ausley

Self - retired

Austin, TX

I urge you to not use public dollars for private education which is what Governor Abbott's Education Savings Accounts actually are. I grew up in Lubbock, Texas and was in Stamford, Abilene, and Lubbock this past week, hearing my family's concerns about public school vouchers that will drain funds from their existing schools to funnel into private schools which many of their communities do not even have. I also am concerned about the lack of accountability for methods and/or curriculum used in these private schools.

Jeffrey Worden

Self

Cedar Park, TX

Please ensure the \$1.7B funding gap for special education is addressed. Our children are already going to be unfairly hurt by the policies of the Voucher Program; it is imperative the state uphold its mandate to ensure every student is given an equal and fair chance at a quality education, especially those of whom already face greater difficulties.

Elaine Chapman

Self

Abilene, TX

I support public education and do not agree with a voucher system that will not be an effective use of school funding. The Texas school systems have been neglected long enough with poor teacher pay and limited funding to schools. Having been in the trenches I have seen the downfall clearly progress to a weakened system where students needs are not met in General Education nor Special Education. Funds for instructional needs have gone from satisfactory to nonexistent in recent years. Until the education of the students who are our future leaders becomes a priority of the state, nothing will improve testing scores! Adding a school voucher system will not benefit Texas students with funding being spread more thinly than it already is! The Representatives elected to serve should be truly listening to the masses who are not supporting your agendas, nor the governor's. Do what is obviously the right thing to do and support the public school system we have rather than choosing to destroy it.

Stephanie Mathews

Self, teacher

Montgomery, TX

In my district, we have qualified over 750 students so far this year for dyslexia and at my school alone have 35 more in line to be tested. At the rate we are going to cover the groups with fidelity we would need 24 more teachers. We will be lucky to get 3-5. This will result in group sized of 8 to 10 and shorted group times to cover more students not meeting the criteria of the fidelity of the program.

Luzdary Montoya

Self

Austin, TX

As a mom of two Teens with dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia and a bilingual Speech Language Pathologist please consider the increase of Special Education funding, this increase will allow my children and Texans's children to be able to be get an advance education and be participants in the workforce. Most importantly to provide educators, Speech Language Pathologist and Reading Interventionist with research based training in regards of learning differences, to reduce the increase turnover of these professionals. Professionally, I have encountered the students I worked with unable to read, unable to develop a budget nor able to fill out a job application. I am confident that you are looking for the welfare of these students. Thank you for your time and your commitment to better serve my children and all Texan's students.

Nadia Khan

Self

Austin, TX

Take us alllllll back! Back to a time when Texas supported families and loved its children, a time when Texans funded public schools in order to provide a basic education to every child whose parents could not otherwise afford it. A time when the public school system gave hope to all children, nurtured teachers to nurture kids from all walks of life, in every corner of the state, sending them off to college as the first in their families, and into careers they never knew existed.

You hold the purse strings that have catapulted us forward to a time when the system is starving, robbing the students to give to the coffers, and claiming the coffers are overflowing with hard-earned cash, rather than students' pencils, papers, and teachers' raises.

And you have the power to take us back. The power to raise the basic allotment per student, not by a sum that continues to drive forward a skeleton that's barely fed enough to be kept alive, but by a sum that will replenish, strengthen, and nurture, the people and supports in our public school system, to soon find Texas public schools, pledging to serve every child, standing tall amongst the states that stake claim to excellent public education for all.

How the mighty have fallen. We used to feel that freedom, that joy, that support, and we want to go back.

Please raise the basic allotment not by \$220, but by an amount to cover inflation, plus what's needed to stop the system from having to rob peter to pay paul at every level. Let's celebrate the release of the surplus, and make a notable commitment to public schools in every corner of the state. We're all suffering, and we want to go back.

Miranda Rogers

Self: pediatric nurse practitioner

Fulshear, TX

As a parent of a child who receives special education for dyslexia, I ask that you please fund the states special education needs. In our Katy ISD district, children are being exited from

Dyslexia services before they are achieving reading at current grade level and allotment of funds for available students is a key reason. Not to mention the significant special education needs of a growing number of students in Texas as we see continued rise in developmental disorders. Please support our schools, teachers and students!

Maria Sanchez, Diagnostician

Plano ISD

Allen, TX

Increase funding for special education. We are identifying masses of students but they are not being properly served.

Faye Holland

myself

Austin, TX

Increase the basic allotment for public education. Our public school's operating budget is the same as 3 proposed vouchers for 3 students. We serve 300 students. We wish that we could use some of that money for our students and community. Please fund public education it is for the good of all and has a huge value and investment to Texas's future. Follow the state constitution and fund public education and don't support private and religious schools.

Cathy Ludgate
Self/Retired
Pflugerville, TX

Dear Congress member,

I would like to ask you to vote against HB 2. As a former homeschool parent, I have seen the tremendous value of being able to tailor a learning program for my child, and fear that having the government mandate requirements to homeschooling would reduce the effectiveness and flexibility that is currently so valuable to the homeschool experience. Let me share my child's experience.

We removed our daughter from a formal classroom setting at the end of fifth grade. At that time, she could not read, write or do simple math problems. She hated school and herself. It was painful to watch. A friend offered to homeschool her along with her own children, so we gladly agreed. My daughter is a kinetic learner, meaning that she learned best by touching and feeling. As an infant, she had suffered from temporary hearing loss due to severe ear infections. We were told at that time that this would likely cause her to have some long term learning difficulties because she missed normal developmental milestones in hearing, and this was certainly the case. However, this homeschool mom and others in the homeschool co-op were amazing in finding creative methods for helping my daughter to learn and overcome the losses that she had. In addition, the quiet country environment and the flexibility in the schedule allowed her to run and get out in the fresh air when her stress and anxiety were too high to focus on classwork. It was amazing to watch the transformation! My daughter went on to graduate from high school and two years of college. She now works as a PCT/Unit clerk in one of the largest and fastest paced labor and delivery hospitals in Texas. Not only that, but she trains others to do the job as well. She is considered an expert in her job, and her managers ask for her input and recommendations in evaluating whether or not trainees are a good fit for the job. I firmly believe that my daughter's success is due to the intervention we did in homeschooling her during those critical years. It gave her the skills, knowledge and tools to overcome her learning challenges.

Please don't take the freedom away from homeschool parents to tailor learning to their child's individual needs. Vote No to government control of homeschooling.

Thank you,
Cathy Ludgate

Lynda Buckley
Self
Dallas, TX

Do what is right and fund public schools. Vouchers are welfare for the wealthy. Texans do not want this forced on them by the government. Give us a VOTE if you think this is right for Texans. Let us decide, not your benefactors.

Andra Villegas
Self. Retired Educator and tax payer
N Richlnd Hls, TX

Vote against HB 2. Public schools need to be supported

Javier Ruiz Javier Ruiz

Self --- a teacher

Odessa, TX

Vouchers will destroy public education. I don't understand how you accuse teachers of indoctrination, yet your solution is to pay for private school --- the epitome of indoctrination! Riddle me that, Batman!

What irks me the most is the amount given to these vouchers versus what we get in public schools. Why is there a huge a difference? Do you know what we could if you funded public education like this? Why are we forced to work with scraps?

Finally, we have to perform with STAAR testing to earn our funding. Yet, the private schools just get this money? No strings attached! They have no accountability for using these funds. That's a huge injustice.

I'm concerned that you are using the special needs population as your tool to get this passed. But, private schools get to choose their students. There's no guarantee that those kids will be accepted. Do the private schools have IEPs? Do they have accommodations? What happens if the kids get sent back to public education? Where does the funding go?

If your solution is to fix education, this is not a fix. This is opening Pandora's Box and releasing new demons against education. Arizona did this and they are hurting now. Don't make Texas kids suffer more. Just fund all schools the right way.

Judith Wyble

Self retired educator

Spring, TX

You will be voted out! We don't want vouchers and you aren't listening!!

Judith Wyble

Self retired teacher

Spring, TX

It is ridiculous how you and the other registers are NOT listening to your constituents! We do NOT want vouchers. You will be voted out!! We will fight you and your ilk tooth and nail, to see you lose your job!

Veronica Moran, Mrs.

Self

Brownsville, TX

As a homeschooling parent, I ask that you oppose the HB 2 and help parents keep our freedom to teach our children without government intervention or control.

Linsey Vasilenko

Self

Dallas, TX

Do not support the school voucher program.

Joy McIntosh

Self

Bonham, TX

I would never oppose freedom of choice; however, I am very opposed to a bill that I do not consider to be about choice, but instead about forcing an agenda. An agenda for education which I believe is harmful and not needed. I believe this to be a personal agenda for Governor Abbott, and I believe that there is a possibility of financial gain for someone, and it will not be the children of Texas, nor the voters of Texas. I believe it is wrong for Texas.