

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 4

Compiled on: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 5:05 PM

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Hearing Date: April 29, 2025 8:00 AM

John Wilks

Self, Occupation: Social Studies Instructional Coordinator for a District (but submitting for myself)
Midland, TX

While I understand the many benefits of the new testing system in the Bill, I am concerned about making Social Studies assessments optional. Our Republic's future depends on developing knowledgeable, engaged citizens who understand our Constitution, our civic virtues, and our history. As it stands now, many elementary schools devote too few instructional minutes to Social Studies because there's no accountability for it. This is causing a crisis in student knowledge in Social Studies that is evident in our 8th and US History scores. Further diminution of accountability to one of our four core academic subjects, and the subject most vital to preserving our liberties and our way of life, would be foolish. And yet, the current state of affairs in Texas schools demonstrates that in those grades where Social Studies is not assessed, it is often taught poorly or not taught at all. This trend should not be allowed to continue in elementary schools and must not spread to secondary schools.

Echoing President Lincoln's words, I urge the committee to take steps to ensure that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth on our watch. We must take steps to guarantee that all Texas students from PK-12 receive high-quality instruction in civics, history, geography, and economics. Whatever you do with HB4, I beg you to include some way of holding campuses accountable for Social Studies instruction.

Thank you.

Danielle Haley

Self
Magnolia, TX

I strongly oppose HB4. The School Board of Education should be the sole administrator of Testing and Assessment rules, NOT the T.E.A. Commissioner. This Bill should be fully struck down.

Taylor Martin

Self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose this Bill, which will concentrate power of education into appointed, not elected, hands. It is antithetical to giving parents "choice" in their children's education and goes against Republican principles of freedom.

Ashley collins

Self

Seabrook, TX

I am opposed to HB 4 as written. This bill expands the power of the TEA commissioner and takes it away from the elected State Board of Education.

It allows the TEA commissioner to create or choose the assessments, decide if the test is reliable, set guidelines for school ratings, and decide to take over an entire schools district for not meeting the standards he personally set. This is entirely too much power for an unelected position without any oversight.

Brittany Escano

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Hello, I would like to ask the rep to please OPPOSE HB4!

Michael Erez Kats

Tomball ISD

Houston, TX

Please stop these ridiculous rating systems that are destroying our public schools in favor unfair voucher programs that are designed for the rich only!

Madeline Lasson, Ms.

Self, current teacher

Austin, TX

I believe that the current system for rating schools is GROSSLY unfair, especially for those school with high need students and families. Data is clear year after year, the schools who perform best are the ones in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Why is this? Do they have better teachers? Maybe- but we are all paid the same across the district I am in, and I have personally seen excellent teachers in high need schools. We all teach the same curriculum. This is more likely a direct result of factors completely out of the schools control: hunger, housing insecurity, medical care insecurity, transience, single parent households with limited resources, parents with limited education, etc.. It is completely ridiculous to rate a schools overall quality based primarily on a single data point of a score on 1 test (even if you look at the same test year after year, it's still 1 metric). We are taught over and over again when assessing kids in schools: 1 data point is NEVER enough to get w full picture of a child. Why is it that the state knows this enough to make sure we practice this when evaluating kids but not enough to change practices when evaluate ing whole schools? The answer is simple and obvious to many of us: the state of Texas WANTS public education to fail. The state wants public support for public education to drop in order to gain traction for charter schools and private school voucher programs, therefore giving themselves more money and giving the state the power to control the content and religions influences in schools. This is, point blank, unamerican. Public schools are a right to every child in this country and denying kids the right to a free and appropriate education, which is free of religious and personal influences, is aggreous and makes me ashamed to be a Texan.

patrick Seidensticker
Zilker Elementary
Austin, TX

Dear Representative Hinojosa,

I am writing to ask Rep. Hinojosa to oppose the passage of HB 4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. We have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, so it is clear STAAR and the current system has failed the children of Texas.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements for assessment frequency, and uses a nationally normed assessment, not a state normed assessment, to meet those requirements.

I am also concerned with how the bill doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong, and states should not be punished unfairly for these questionable scores. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results. We should be supporting our schools through recovery, not punishing them.

I respectfully ask that you reset the timeline, using the 2024–25 school year as a fresh start, and discard the flawed data from the past two years.

Finally, I'm concerned that HB 4 gives more and more power to the Commissioner of Education. Again, we have seen little meaningful improvement in results despite spending billions of dollars, punishing schools, and taking over districts. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and even more frustration.

Please listen to the voices of your constituents who are living the reality these policies create. We are counting on your leadership. Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Thank you for your time and service.

Reed Bilz, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am the mother of six kids who have graduated from Texas public schools. I am writing to ask you to OPPOSE HB 4.

HB 4 isn't about helping students — it's about politicians grabbing more control over Texas public schools. HB 4 would force local school districts into silence, block their ability to fight back when the state fails them, and place more power into the hands of bureaucrats who have already neglected our kids.

Our schools deserve real solutions, not political punishment. Texas students deserve better.

Vote NO on HB 4.

Gail Etheredge
Self
ODESSA, TX

Stop the Starr Tests....please, for the students and teachers!

Mandy Menzer

self

Austin, TX

As a Texas parent, I am against HB4 as currently written. I would like for our public schools to have the same flexible accountability system as the private school voucher system. School districts should be allowed the same choice whether to take the state assessment or to use any nationally norm-referenced assessment.

Whitney Oestreich

Self

Mckinney, TX

Public school vouchers are clearly not supported by your constituents. Shame on you for not doing your job and representing the people and needs of Texas. Tax rates are high in Texas and getting higher every year and yet you want to subsidize people wealthy enough to send their kids to private institutions with OUR money. Hopefully yall get it together or they vote you out. You have no business representing Texans.

Karina Quesada

self

Houston, TX

I strongly oppose HB 4. As a parent in Houston ISD, which has been forcibly taken over by the Texas Education Agency, I have witnessed firsthand the harm caused by centralized, unaccountable control over our schools. HB 4 would only deepen these problems statewide.

Since the takeover of HISD, an uncertified superintendent appointed by the commissioner banned the use of novels in English Language Arts classes, depriving my children and their peers of authentic literature and critical thinking opportunities. Instead, their education has been reduced to worksheets and test-preparation drills. This narrowing of instruction to serve testing metrics is dismantling real learning.

While HB 4 claims to "streamline" standardized testing, it proposes a year-round testing model that would increase testing frequency and further reduce authentic instruction. When I opted my children out of STAAR testing, despite submitting a documented refusal, they were still presented with the test. They were pulled from instruction while their classmates continued learning, losing valuable academic time and being placed in the impossible position of having to choose between disobeying their mother or complying with a school authority figure.

HB 4 would institutionalize this coercive, test-obsessed environment across Texas. It would also eliminate independent oversight of assessments, allowing a commissioner-appointed committee to determine test validity with no external accountability. Based on my experience seeing the misuse of assessments to justify takeover actions, this is deeply concerning.

Under the current state control, HISD's Board of Managers consistently rubber-stamps decisions without meaningful debate. They regularly enter closed session for hours and emerge to approve major items that were never discussed publicly, appearing to disregard the spirit of the Texas Open Meetings Act. As parents, teachers, students, and community members, we have no one to hold accountable. HB 4 would expand this broken model statewide, stripping authority from elected boards and silencing local voices.

Finally, HB 4 requires previously imposed sanctions to continue even when a district challenges an unfair rating. From personal experience filing a grievance to protect my children's educational rights, I know justice takes time. HB 4 would punish communities indefinitely even when the state's actions are wrong.

My family's experience — forced STAAR testing, banned novels, loss of real instruction, coercion, and lack of accountability — is not isolated. HB 4 would turn every district into what HISD has sadly become under state control.

HB 4 must be rejected. Texas students deserve real education, not endless testing. Texas families deserve a voice, not permanent silencing.

Trista Bishop-Watt
Good Reason Houston
Houston, TX

RE: HB 4 - AGAINST as substituted

Texas' academic assessment and accountability system is essential to promoting student growth, driving school improvement, and preparing all graduates for postsecondary success. To fulfill this mission, the system must be fair, transparent, rigorous, and focused on academic outcomes.

As filed, House Bill 4 proposed important refinements to strengthen our assessment and accountability systems. However, we have strong reservations about changes in the substitute that would transition to a nationally normed assessment, reduce core subject progress monitoring, and incorporate nonacademic inputs into A–F ratings. For these reasons, we respectfully oppose HB 4 and offer recommendations to address these concerns.

Academic ratings are a critical tool for transparency, guiding families, informing policymakers, and helping school systems direct support where needed. By maintaining a clear focus on academic outcomes, the A–F system ensures stakeholders can easily understand how well schools are fulfilling their core mission: reading, math, and writing proficiency.

Adding nonacademic measures risks diluting the clarity and rigor of the system. Louisiana's experience illustrates this risk; incorporating extracurricular participation inflated scores and masked academic proficiency, prompting lawmakers to reverse course. With only 53% of Texas students reading on grade level and 41% proficient in math, we cannot afford to lose focus. We recommend recognizing excellence outside academics through designations on TXschools.gov, not by embedding these factors into overall ratings.

High-quality assessments aligned to Texas standards are vital for measuring learning and providing actionable feedback. Nationally normed assessments rank students against one another, not based on mastery of content, creating fairness concerns and limiting the state's ability to reflect classroom experiences.

Texas can already leverage National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for national comparisons. Alarming, Texas ranks in the bottom 26% of states for fourth-grade reading and falls to the bottom 12% by eighth grade. Scaling back state assessments to the federal minimum would obscure these urgent challenges. Texas must maintain robust, criterion-referenced assessments that provide timely, detailed data to drive improvement.

Rather than adopting nationally normed tests, we urge the Legislature to build on the Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot, developed alongside Texas educators. This model offers a promising, rigorous alternative that shortens test time, reduces burdens on teachers and students, and provides actionable data throughout the school year.

Thank you, Chairman Buckley and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide feedback on HB 4. We appreciate your leadership and welcome the opportunity to continue working together toward solutions that ensure every Texas student is prepared for success.

Halcyon Ramsey
Self - parent/mother of 3 public school students
Mckinney, TX

Our Texas public schools are not being properly funded, thereby requiring schools to cut staff, cut programs, increase class sizes, limit learning resources, and so much more. And now you want to assess penalties on the public schools whose students cannot achieve a certain testing score?? This is outrageous!!!!!!!!!! Our public school educators are quitting in droves and leaving the profession because they are overworked, underpaid and are not supported by the state. My children, along with other public school students in Texas, deserve better too! They cannot be expected to perform at optimum levels when their teachers are overworked and when their school is having to cut corners everywhere due to lack of funding. Please do something RIGHT for Texas public schools and Texas taxpayers. Fund our schools!!! And don't punish the educators, administrators and schools that are trying desperately to survive in the face of constant attacks from their own state government. This is shameful!

Jennie Birkholz
self
Round Rock, TX
I oppose

Robin Santana
Self
McKinney, TX

As a lifelong resident of the state of Texas I am appalled that public schools will be scrutinized to this degree! Yet private schools who will be receiving public funding will not be held to the same standards! Funding public schools properly will actually help students and teachers be more successful!! I grew up attending public schools and I would not change that for anything. The teachers I had back then were extremely well qualified and lived what they did because they had the funding and weren't scrutinized like they are now. Do better for the children of this what once was a beautiful state. Turn it around instead of punishing them!

Dallas Kennedy
Self teacher
Odessa, TX

The STAAR test is particularly cruel towards our most vulnerable populations. Students who are told by their doctor that they have less than a year to live still have to take the STAAR. There have be situations were students had seizures and still has to finish the test. If the only way a student can communicate is by blinking, they have to take the STAAR. Students that are hospitalized due to severe injuries have to take the STAAR.

I have had special needs students in self contained classrooms who didn't understand why they had to be separated from the class take a test alone in a testing room. They had panic attacks, attacked others and harmed themselves. The amount of stress put on students in the name of testing is borderline abuse. We need to scrap the STAAR and replace it with a norm referenced test and exempt for medically fragile students from testing requirements.

Brie Moynihan
Raise Your Hand Texas/Roy Miller High School
Corpus Christi, TX

As a public-school educator and product of the Texas educational system, I can speak with confidence when I say that continuing to use the STAAR test as a proving point rather than a proficiency gauge will only continue to widen the gap that our students are facing on a daily basis. 21 years ago, my graduating class was the first in the state to be told that if we did not pass our EOY test, that we would not graduate. Applying that much pressure to not only students by teachers caused a major shift in the science of teaching that has yet to be addressed. It used to be that EOY/EOC tests were meant to gauge the academic readiness of students which would help determine the best course of action to assist in those individuals' needs within the classroom (academic accommodations, repeating a grade level, etc.). In the last 20 years, all that standardized tests have created are a generation of students with high performance anxiety who are unable to critically think through problems. If we continue to hold this course of action, the comprehension gaps in our students and the frustration in our teachers will only continue to grow exponentially. By tying teachers' hands behind their backs and telling them to teach to a standardized test, students are being relegated to remedial learning at best in the post-secondary level.

Martin Marez
Parents
Dallas, TX

I disagree with the bill not requiring Permission from the Parents. One should have choices for the child
So I disagree on the bill passing

Kathy Conring

Cisco ISD

Cisco, TX

My name is Kathy Conring, and I've proudly served in Texas public education for 34 years—29 of those focused directly on assessment. I currently serve as both a counselor and District Testing Coordinator, and I'm also an officer for the Texas Statewide Network of Assessment Professionals.

I am not new to the assessment and accountability world. It's important that we hold ourselves to high standards and ensure that all students are learning and growing. But I also believe our current approach needs to evolve.

Right now, too much weight is placed on a single test, on a single day, to define a student's ability or a teacher's effectiveness.

That snapshot doesn't tell the whole story. What about the student who hasn't eaten since yesterday? I've sat with students in tears over test stress. These factors matter, and they affect the data we use to make critical decisions. I've watched dedicated teachers lose instructional time to prep and paperwork. And I've been in countless meetings interpreting data that only tells part of the story.

I was very excited to see the revisions of HB4, this bill has shifted in the direction of student-centered and growth-focused. Changing the Assessment to 3 times a year allows the ability to see growth of students, not the one day snapshot. Growth shows us the progress a student is making, and it better reflects the impact of a teacher or a school. For 2 years our district participated in the TTAP Pilot Program from TEA. It was an overall a better assessment for students.

We also need to look beyond test scores. Let's include school climate, student engagement, attendance, and feedback from staff and families. A healthy school environment—where students feel safe, connected, and supported—is just as important as academic achievement.

And finally, accountability should be less about punishment and more about improvement. Schools that struggle need resources, coaching, and professional development—not labels that demoralize and stigmatize.

If we want to truly support our students, we need a model that sees the whole child and supports the whole school. Let's make accountability about growth, support, and opportunity—not just numbers. My goal, like yours, is to ensure a strong, fair, and future-ready education system for every child in Texas. I do believe the revised HB4 is moving in the right direction.

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to listen to those of us on the ground.

Nick Mollberg

self, software sales

Austin, TX

This overreach is very unnecessary and intrusive, I stand in firm opposition to this bill. We need to be empowering our local ISDs, not forcing pointless oversight onto them without any articulated reason for it. TEA does good work, but this will not serve the students or constituents of Texas ISDs

Sarah Terrell

Self

Houston, TX

I am opposed to this bill. It places too much power and discretion over testing in the TEA Commissioner's office. Tests are no longer used just to assess how a given student is doing—they are vehicles for justification of punitive actions like takeovers of public school districts. At least under current law, the elected SBOE is the testing administrator and plays a part in assessment. Moving all these functions to the unelected Commissioner is a bad idea.

HB 4 also places practical obstacles to a school district's ability to defend itself from unlawful actions by the state. It makes it unlawful for board members to vote to spend money on legal services, for instance regarding a state takeover.

Carolyn Dower

self - retired nurse

Austin, TX

Please OPPOSE HB 4. It tightens state control over public schools, weakens local advocacy, and expands TEA's authority to punish struggling schools instead of supporting them, and I do not agree with that.

Janie Brittain

Self

Garland, TX

Vote NO on HB4. I oppose the TEA taking on any new responsibilities. I favor the abolition of the TEA. It has been a failure when it comes to improving academic achievement of our students. Vote NO on HB4.

karen horgan

self

Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose HB 4. This bill will allow one single person, the appointed TEA commissioner, entirely too much power over our schools.

Under HB 4, the TEA commissioner gets to:

- ? design the test
- ? decide if it is valid or reliable
- ? set the cutoff scores
- ? exclude indicators when he wants
- ? It also expands the ability of commissioner to take over districts. He could take over an entire district for not meeting his personally set standards

All without any elected oversight! There would be no accountability system at all. This Bill is unacceptable.

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All without any elected oversight.

There would be no accountability system at all. This Bill is unacceptable.

warren horgan

self

Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose HB 4. Where's the accountability? Under HB 4, there would be no accountability system in place. The appointed TEA commissioner would wield all the power. HB 4 would expand the ability of commissioner to take over districts. Make TEA, not the elected State Board of Education, the administrator of testing and assessment rules.

As it is currently written, HB 4 would allow the TEA commissioner to design the test, decide if it is valid or reliable, set the cutoff scores, exclude indicators when he wants, and then take over an entire district for not meeting his personally set standards.

All this with no oversight. Unacceptable.

Sandy Kress

self/retired

Austin, TX

I'm proud of the role I played in helping prepare the first systematic accountability system in Texas, working with the EEPC, Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, Paul Sadler, et. al. I'm also proud of the fact that achievement growth in Texas during the 1990s and 2000s was among the best in the nation.

I am worried, however, that standards were lowered and accountability was largely eviscerated in the early 2010s, and that these policy actions helped lead in Texas to some of the largest achievement declines in the nation.

The fact that, with changes in policy and court challenges, we haven't had a functioning accountability system in years has exacerbated the problem.

Here are my comments on HB 4. My basic concern is that it deemphasizes by far too much the role achievement per se should play in school ratings.

While I recognize the need for using other factors, no factor should count for more than achievement. For, at the end of the day, either Texas students will know and be able to do what is required for a good job and a productive life, or they don't. So, that needs to be what drives accountability the most.

Bottom line, in my view, no school ought to get higher than a C if its achievement mark is a D or an F.

Here are my specific comments:

1) As mentioned, the bill badly deemphasizes the role of achievement. If progress gets a better grade than achievement, the agency's view of progress trumps real achievement. Even if achievement is an F, the school can still get a B. This is wrong. It will send untrue signals to parents and teachers, allowing very low levels of achievement to be perpetuated because there are no consequences for it.

2) The use of input factors is a mistake. Accountability is about outputs. Educators ought to be trusted to pick the best inputs. Plus, there are no ways to assure this is anything more than a record keeping of activities designed to get a bump in the ratings. And if it goes higher than 10%, it really gets worrisome

3) The proposal in the transition period to let the school get the higher of its ratings over two years is bad. It just allows schools to have no accountability in the second year, if the first year rating was good or acceptable.

4. While I realize NRTs are fashionable these days, the record should show we went to CRTs years ago because educators demanded them. Their appeal was: "if you're going to hold us accountable for teaching to TX standards, use tests based on TX standards."

5. I have other worries about all these new tests - delivering, monitoring, safeguarding against cheating, and even more the possibility of their leading to far more teaching to the test than we have today.

In conclusion, my main concern is sending out false signals with As and Bs where achievement is low. I've done analyses of how badly this can hurt students with low achievement. It's not good. I'd be glad to share them with the committee.

With respect, I'd advise: either have true accountability, or have none.

Madison Fairchild
Self
Flower Mound, TX

I was at the JHR building this morning at 7:15 am to testify on this bill, but I had to head home to Argyle to get back to my 2 year old and my students.

My name is Maddie Fairchild, and I'm a 5th grade Reading and Language Arts teacher in Argyle ISD. Over the past nine years, I've seen firsthand how our accountability system impacts educators, students, and families.

I work in a high-performing district that values meaningful, engaging, and future-ready education. Our success comes from a focus on excellence- not just test scores. Reducing a district's accountability rating to a single test score misrepresents what's really happening in Texas schools.

As a parent when deciding where I want to plant my family, I look at more than test results: community satisfaction, teacher quality and retention, safety, and stewardship all matter deeply. That's what defines a great school district.

I want to emphasize this: Our students are losing their love of learning because, in their minds, everything ties back to STAAR. It is absolutely heartbreaking and defeating.

As a teacher, I know that expecting 5th graders to sit silently and test for 4 hours is developmentally inappropriate. It goes against everything we understand about how children learn, focus, and function at this age.

Formative assessments are what truly help me support and grow my students. They reflect real progress and give fair comparisons. Basing accountability on nationally norm referenced assessments and other non-test based indicators of performance such as attendance, graduation rates, and overall district culture and climate is what will set Texas apart in Education.

Katie Haydin
Argyle ISD
Justin, TX

Hello, Chairman Buckley and members of the committee. I drove in yesterday afternoon (4/28) after work. I was at the capitol for the committee hearing at 7:30 AM this morning. Unfortunately, what is happening on the floor is going too long and I have to leave to return to my 5 and 3 year old, as well as my school kiddos. My name is Katie Haydin, and I've been an educator in Texas public schools for the past nine years. I currently serve as an assistant principal in Argyle ISD, where one of my responsibilities is serving as the campus testing coordinator.

I believe it's time we move toward an accountability system that truly reflects the full picture of our school's success—beyond the STAAR test.

I work in a high-performing district with an A rating and a 96% attendance rate. We have strong family engagement and dedicated teachers who consistently go above and beyond. But I just watched those same educators walk through the trenches of STAAR season—exhausted, demoralized, and stressed—not because they aren't effective, but because they're forced to teach to a developmentally inappropriate, high-stakes test that doesn't capture the richness of what our schools provide.

Our schools should be measured by more than a single test—by the relationships we build, the growth our students show over time, and the rich experiences we offer through extracurriculars and community engagement. An accountability system that accounts for these is fair and shows the true values of our schools.

Formative assessments give us real-time, actionable data to support students. They inform instruction and growth, not just labels and rankings. By broadening the measures of success, we honor the whole child, the whole educator, and the whole school community.

Expanding accountability indicators beyond STAAR, incorporating formative, nationally norm-referenced assessments (which we also already do), and allowing legal recourse when TEA oversteps are important in the creation of an accurate and fair system.

Thank you for your time and for your thoughtful consideration of this bill.

Ashley Quintana

Self

Benbrook, TX

I am opposed to HB 4 as written. This bill expands the power of the TEA commissioner and takes it away from the elected State Board of Education. It allows the TEA commissioner to create or choose the assessments, decide if the test is reliable, set guidelines for school ratings, and decide to take over an entire school district for not meeting the standards he personally set. This is entirely too much power for an unelected position without any oversight. I support doing away with the STAAR test for a test more like MAP that is used at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to assess growth but this cannot all be decided by one appointed commissioner.

Quynhthy Bui

Self

Houston, TX

I respectfully urge you to vote against HB4.

HB4 would significantly expand the powers of an appointed commissioner while reducing the authority of the elected State Board of Education. This shift undermines the democratic voice of Texas voters who deserve a say in how their public schools are governed.

Additionally, HB4 promotes even more year-round testing, further burdening our students and teachers. Excessive testing narrows the curriculum, increases stress, and detracts from real learning. Our children need classrooms focused on growth, creativity, and critical thinking — not endless assessments.

Finally, HB4 makes it easier for the commissioner to take over local school districts. We have seen that takeovers often lead to instability, higher turnover, and disruption in communities rather than meaningful long-term improvement.

Texas families want strong public schools. We want transparency, accountability, and stability — not unchecked political power, excessive testing, and weakened local control.

Please listen to the voices of Texas parents, teachers, and voters. Reject HB4.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jean LeFebvre

Self / Wardrobe Consultant

Austin, TX

This type of therapy must be approved by parents, first because they are the child responsible adult and know what what the child needs for emotional stability; second because this type of therapy without parental consent puts the school district a risk for a serious lawsuit if something goes amiss with the child.

Melissa Yarborough

self

Houston, TX

HB 4 purports to improve accountability for schools, but it does not such thing. All it does is reduce the accountability of the Texas Education Agency to the people of Texas. Rather than our duly elected State Board of Education calling the shots, the appointed T.E.A. Commissioner and his own appointees would be able to decide if the state assessments are valid and reliable and would be responsible for testing administration and rules. That is the opposite of accountability.

It also purports to "reduce" testing while allowing the commissioner to set as many repetitive tests as he likes throughout the school year.

The only things this bill actually reduces are any accountability for the reliability of assessment tools, the time students have for learning, the likelihood of districts to focus on best outcomes for children rather than best outcomes for a test score spreadsheet, and the ability of the people of Texas to have any say in our children's education.

Vote No on HB 4 to ensure T.E.A.'s accountability to the public.

Samantha Nelson

Self (stay at home mom)

Nazareth, TX

I urge you to take my child's experience into consideration when looking over this bill. This bill is so important for the children and parents of the state of Texas. In September of 2022 my oldest child was in the 3rd grade. I informed her school that I would be opting her out of STAAR. we went back and forth, them telling me I wasn't allowed to, me knowing I was as thousands of parents do. In April 2023 I did indeed instruct my child to tab through the assessment and submit it blank and she did. In July 2023 our superintendent and school board talked to people for advice on how to "beef up" the retention policy to deter parents like me from opting their children out of STAAR (my child is the only child in our small school to do so). So in July 2023 the school board passed a policy that any student who does not "meet grade level" on STAAR will have to go to a retention meeting and during that retention meeting it has to be a unanimous yes from parent, teacher and principal to promote student to the next grade. Because of HB 4545 I knew my child could not be held back based on STAAR scores alone so again in April 2024 I opted her out again. She finished that 4th grade year an A average student. in August 2024 just days before she was supposed to start her 5th grade year, the principal made the sole decision to retain her even though my husband, myself and her teacher wanted her promoted. She clearly showed she mastered 4th grade but her principal wanted to make sure no other parents followed my lead to opt out their children. I was told by a school board member later that day that the school board would back him on his decision because they wanted to make sure no other parents got the idea to follow what I was doing with my child for fear of losing funding and losing their precious A rating. We filed a lawsuit for retaliatory discrimination. Long story short we ended up settling out of court but not for 6 months and thousands of dollars later. My child's life and our entire family's life has drastically been changed because of this and I do not want any other child to ever go through this. It is my biggest fear that other schools will hear about this policy and implement it as well (as far as I know our school is the only one in the state with this policy). Please get rid of this test. For the sake of students, parents and teachers everywhere. No child should ever have to suffer as my child has because people in power are more worried about funding than they are about the wellbeing of its students. Please make an amendment that retention is not possible based on any future nationally norm-referenced test alone and if a child has passing grades retention and promotion BOTH will be at the discretion of the parents and the parents ALONE. Stand up for our children. Thank you!

Samantha Nelson

Self (stay at home mom)

Nazareth, TX

I urge you to take my child's experience into consideration when looking over this bill. This bill is so important for the children and parents of the state of Texas. In September of 2022 my oldest child was in the 3rd grade. I informed her school that I would be opting her out of STAAR. we went back and forth, them telling me I wasn't allowed to, me knowing I was as thousands of parents do. In April 2023 I did indeed instruct my child to tab through the assessment and submit it blank and she did. In July 2023 our superintendent and school board talked to people for advice on how to "beef up" the retention policy to deter parents like me from opting their children out of STAAR (my child is the only child in our small school to do so). So in July 2023 the school board passed a policy that any student who does not "meet grade level" on STAAR will have to go to a retention meeting and during that retention meeting it has to be a unanimous yes from parent, teacher and principal to promote student to the next grade. Because of HB 4545 I knew my child could not be held back based on STAAR scores alone so again in April 2024 I opted her out again. She finished that 4th grade year an A average student. in August 2024 just days before she was supposed to start her 5th grade year, the principal made the sole decision to retain her even though my husband, myself and her teacher wanted her promoted. She clearly showed she mastered 4th grade but her principal wanted to make sure no other parents followed my lead to opt out their children. I was told by a school board member later that day that the school board would back him on his decision because they wanted to make sure no other parents got the idea to follow what I was doing with my child for fear of losing funding and losing their precious A rating. We filed a lawsuit for retaliatory discrimination. Long story short we ended up settling out of court but not for 6 months and thousands of dollars later. My daughter is finally in the grade she should be in but my child's life and our entire family's life has drastically been changed because of this and I do not want any other child to ever go through this. It is my biggest fear that other schools will hear about this policy and implement it as well (as far as I know our school is the only one in the state with this policy). Please get rid of this test. For the sake of students, parents and teachers everywhere. No child should ever have to suffer as my child has because people in power are more worried about funding than they are about the wellbeing of its students. Please make an amendment that retention is not possible based on any future nationally norm-referenced test alone and if a child has passing grades retention and promotion BOTH will be at the discretion of the parents and the parents ALONE. Stand up for our children. Thank you!

D.S. Zamora

Self/Retired

Houston, TX

Opposed to HB 4 without suspension of the school grading system until a revised testing scheme has been deployed. All this system is currently doing is punishing students.

Jessi Heiner
Self
Houston, TX

I would like to tell you about a miracle school in Texas. Wainwright Elementary. HISD Superintendent Mike Miles himself called us a miracle. We are one of 3 schools in the entire state that went from an F to an A in just one year under the miracle NES program Mike Miles brought our school. I could not be more proud to be a part of the Wainwright community. But I can tell you that just because Mike Miles tells you that we are a miracle school, just because he tells you that he saved our school district, just because he claims that NES is a miracle program that turned our school from an F to an A campus in just 1 year, doesn't make it true.

What is factual about Wainwright ES? Our PTA is not allowed to go on campus until after 4:15pm, and the campus closes promptly at 5pm. During the first year of the takeover, our miracle NES year, we lost 37 staff members. Many left during the middle of the school year. During our miracle NES year, 10 out of roughly 30 teachers were uncertified, first year teachers. Our library program was removed, and our students learn only from PowerPoints and worksheets. Books are no longer allowed to be taught as part of the curriculum.

Given what you just heard, do you really think that our school went from an F to an A in one year because of a miracle NES pill? Or do you think someone who stands to gain half a million per year might be manipulating the students who take certain tests, to make his miracle program look good, and manipulating you for his own personal gain?

The A-F rating has only caused harm to our amazing school. TEA Commissioner Mike Morath and his overreach in taking over our school district has harmed our school. Please do not give Morath and the TEA more power and open the door for more school districts to be taken over by him.

We can't win in this system. It systematically crushes schools like ours, where 93% of our families are economically disadvantaged.

These artificial ratings scare parents away, lump schools into "good" and "bad" categories, and worst of all - they pit school communities against each other, rather than encouraging empowerment and collaboration across the district for the betterment of every child. Please vote no on HB4

Jennifer Kost, Mrs.

self (stay at home mom, volunteer in schools)

Austin, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley & members of the Committee,

Thank you for providing the CS for HB 4 on your webpage. It is, in my opinion, a huge improvement to our public school accountability system. I encourage you to accept & vote yes on the committee substitute. (NOT on HB 4 as originally introduced.)

I offer some comments for your consideration (sadly you cannot see all the checks, plusses, & smiley faces in the margins of my marked-up copy).

What is the reasoning for de-emphasizing the "closing the gaps" indicator?

- Pg 18, line 4: why remove highly mobile students from the group of concern? Frequently changing schools/districts strongly correlates with academic struggles.

- Pg 21, line 2: going from "not <30%" to "not >5%" is a significant reduction. The "not <30%" requirement was added in the 2017 session, so it's not a new factor in the dramatic 233% increase in F-rated schools in the 2023 accountability ratings. Closing the gap is vital for school improvement, & while many factors are outside of school/district control (i.e. strong correlation of low STAAR scores with poverty, requirements that English language learners take all STAAR tests in English once they're in 6th grade), schools & districts have a responsibility to ensure all students achieve. Without more information, would you consider making the requirement "not more than 25%"?

- Pg 22, line 24 through pg 23, line 4: why remove the "closing the gap" allocation entirely if allowed? Would that domain score still be reported?

Pg 23, line 9: I appreciate the deadlines, & would like to ensure schools/districts are not penalized if the agency misses its deadline. Between the sentences on line 9, please insert: "Districts or campuses that had received an F rating the preceding year will be considered "Not Rated" until the agency assigns their rating for the current year."

Please also consider adding two amendments of the Education Code to the committee substitute:

#1: Section 39.023 (1) - provides for the administration of the assessment in Spanish to some emergent bilingual students for up to 3 years. I would like to amend this section by striking "in grades three through five". (I suspect some of the decline in school ratings from elementary to middle school is because of the difficulties many students face in taking their tests in English. We want all students to master English, but it takes time & Spanish-speaking students enter our schools at all grade levels.)

#2: Section 39.054 (a-4) provides for circumstances when a school / district would be considered "Not Rated", I would like to add: (5) "if, statewide, the number of schools or districts receiving an "F" rating increased by 25% or more over the prior year, all schools or districts that dropped to an F from a higher rating will be reported as "Not Rated" for the current year." To me, this statewide drop indicates something outside the schools' / districts' control, for which they should not be penalized.

Thank you!

Sophia Mirto

Self

Austin, TX

I am testifying on the bill as submitted.

I agree with the author that we are “cramming too much into too short of a runway” but I’m not sure how this will increase literacy in Texas.

I’m concerned that HB 4 would reduce the independence of ISDs by making it more difficult for them to block inaccurate representations, and I’m concerned that this concentrates power in the hands of the unelected TEA commissioner. The elected state board of education is answerable to the people of Texas and reflects our constitutional right to self-governance, article 1 section 2 of the TX constitution. It is responsible for the implementation of an “efficient system of free public schools” Article 7, Section 1.

The TEA commissioner is appointed by the governor, which means the TEA’s policies could change widely over the year based on which party holds the governor’s seat. This is less representative and to me, does not respect our state constitution.

Currently, ISDs can file lawsuits to block the release of the ratings and injunct policies while the judicial system considers their argument. The process the bill creates, instead of a simple lawsuit, is too complicated to explain in these few minutes, but it would limit a school districts’ ability to pay their attorneys when they sue the state to defend their independence.

The bill also prohibits the TEA commissioner from assigning an overall performance rating of “not rated” to all districts or all campuses statewide. This option of “not rating” a school during a crisis was essential during COVID, when every school system in Texas was coded “not rated.”

I see no reasonable data to back the claims that the new test and regulations will “ensure Texas ranks in the top five states in preparing students for post-secondary success within 15 years,” and I’m concerned about the long-term impact of increasing the power of TEA over local Independent school districts.

Finally, In Texas, students start taking standardized tests in third grade. This is an unreasonably low age. I invite you to look into the education system of Finland, a country with a 100% literacy rate. The Finnish education system emphasizes play-based learning, collaborative teaching, and does not have standardized testing in early grades.

Anita Wadhwa

self

Houston, TX

The takeover has been the most devastating event to happen in my lifetime as an educator and parent of two girls in HISD. Due to the accountability system, based on spot scores through which admin and teachers can be terminated at any time, novels have been removed from the curriculum. My daughter has not read a single book this year. Also, she has not checked out one book from the library. This bill encourages a one size fits all, undemocratic system which removes local autonomy and promotes government intrusion while not providing the funding needed to sustain the reforms that TEA promotes.

Donna King

Self - retired

Georgetown, TX

Vote No

Michele Rodrigues, Mrs.

Self retired

Austin, TX

You previously voted for parental choice. BE CONSISTENT. Vote NO on SB10!

Jennifer Kost, Mrs.

self (stay at home mom, volunteer in schools)

Austin, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and members of the Committee,

I'm following up on my earlier online testimony with a request to include two additional revisions to the Education Code in the Committee Substitute for HB 4:

#1: Section 39.054 (a-4) provides for circumstances when a school / district would be considered "Not Rated", earlier I recommended adding: (5) "if, statewide, the number of schools or districts receiving an "F" rating increased by 25% or more over the prior year, all schools or districts that dropped to an F from a higher rating will be reported as "Not Rated" for the current year." I inadvertently dropped my note that this subsection should be made retroactive to ratings from the 2022-23 school year and subsequent ratings.

#2: Section 39.102 (a) lists actions the commissioner may take if a district does not meet academic performance standards. Please remove: "(7) appoint a conservator to oversee the operations of the district;" and edit: "(8) appoint a management team to direct the operations of the district in areas of insufficient performance or require the district to obtain certain services under a contract with another person;" by changing "direct" to "advise" and "certain" to "advisory". These subsections provide for extreme penalties that remove local control, voices, and values from the system, and remove control from the duly elected school board trustees. Further, there is not even a protocol for escalation - if a district becomes subject to interventions or sanctions, the commissioner can take any of the actions, subject only to their own discretion, which creates tremendous pressure on districts to avoid the possibility of the most extreme interventions by making drastic decisions such as closing or combining schools, to the detriment of students and schools.

I also urge you to consider adding a sixth indicator, for meaningful parent/family engagement, to Section 8, modifying Section 39.053, in the newly proposed subsection (c-4) for optional district-requested indicators (pg 19, following line 5). I don't know what would be a meaningful measure of parental engagement (certainly not the response rate to family surveys). I think it would be really helpful to get feedback from principals of high-achieving Title I schools to see what recommendations they have on this idea, and for these optional indicators. There are many barriers to meaningful parental/family engagement, especially for families with limited resources, no matter how much they love their children and desire their success, but we always hear that parental engagement is highly correlated with student success.

Thank you for your diligence and time, especially these marathon days and nights.

Zenobia C. Joseph

Self - Educational Consultant/Policy Analyst, A+ WRITERS Consulting

Austin, TX

Against HB 4. Repeal HB 1416 STAAR tutoring!

1. Discrimination: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 “prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin” (USDOJ, 2025). “We already discriminate based on where people live,” Rep. James Frank said March 11, 2025.

2. Demographics: March 22, 2024 Austin Chronicle noted, “African-American students are doing worse regardless of socioeconomic status” in AISD.

3. Author’s Intent: Create an “Instructionally Supportive Assessment Program.”

a. Legislative History: “House Bill 22, 85th Texas Legislature [m]andates that the commissioner ‘continuously improve student performance to achieve the goals of eliminating achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and ... prepar[e] students for postsecondary success’” (#TEADOMAIN3, n.d.).

b. Problem: Specifying “balanced and streamlined statewide assessment program” is overly broad. HB 4 “federally-required minimum” (e.g., reading, math) disregards Writing TEKS/college-readiness curriculum. To earn a degree requires writing papers.

4. Floor Amendment: Add writing, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and twice-exceptional gifted/special education students. Anecdotally, I taught a Black male who ran to the tree line or under portables near-daily but scored commendable in Writing despite his mother dying of AIDS in jail. Coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings, this theory “focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement ... to uphold their cultural identities” (CA DOE, 2025). Also prohibit F-rated campuses from misleadingly advertising district success (e.g., F-rated HSA-Rundberg charter school banner shows Harmony Excellence, 25 Years).

a. Justification: HB 4 states, “the commissioner shall increase the rigor by which the commissioner determines the overall performance ratings ... [to] achieve the goals of: (1) eliminating achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; and (2) ensuring this state ranks nationally in the top five[.]”

b. Domain 3 Disconnect: Culturally-relevant pedagogy frames disaggregated data. HB 4 specifies, “closing the gaps domain, the use of disaggregated data to demonstrate the differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other factors, including: (A) students formerly receiving special education services.”

5. IEP: To reach “all abilities” noted in Chair Buckley’s layout, add Federal Law. “The child’s IEP is accessible to ... any other service provider who is responsible for its implementation.” Texas’ 1-million longitudinal study found Black males and SPED students got the most discretionary discipline referrals (Fabelo et al., 2011). Over 12 Austin public/charter schools withhold the Individualized Education Program. Commissioner may investigate “violations of civil rights or other requirements” (TEC, Sec. 39.003). Require TEA to create an IEP Access Coversheet and Compensatory Education Noncompliance Form.

Ann Jensen, Ms

Self, retired educator

San Marcos, TX

I am a former Texas educator, having taught 2nd grade in Leander, Texas, and a proud parent of two Texas high school graduates. HB 4 goes in the exact wrong direction in helping keep teachers satisfied and in the profession. The A-F school ratings have been a disaster, pressuring districts to jump through hoops that do not benefit students and their families to avoid low ratings when even one school in the district is struggling. Witness what is happening at Lamar Middle School in AISD, my childrens' alma mater, which is facing a very large transfer of students from a low-performing middle school. Lamar is already overcrowded; burdening it with a huge influx of students in order to avoid TEA oversight hurts parent, teachers, and students. We need to give districts more resources to tackle low-performing schools, not more ineffective guidance and oversight from TEA. This bill gives way too much authority to the head of TEA, who is not subject to the vote of Texans. And given what's at stake, schools should not have to foot the bill for a court challenge.

JAMES GALLAGHER

self

JONESTOWN, TX

Local control of school districts is the small government conservative approach to district governance. Reject this bill.

Lori Farrar-Kakashvili

Self

Savannah, TX

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lori Farrar-Kakashvili , and I am submitting this testimony on my own behalf regarding House Bill 4, which addresses public school accountability standards.

As a parent and advocate for strong public education, I support a fair, meaningful, and transparent accountability system that reflects student growth, promotes family engagement, and prepares all students for college, career, and military success. My views align with Texas PTA's longstanding commitment to these values.

Support for Aspects of HB 4:

I support provisions of HB 4 that recognize multiple indicators of school success beyond a single test score. Measures that prioritize academic growth, access to rigorous coursework, and College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) programs better reflect the diverse ways students achieve long-term success. I also support incorporating family engagement into accountability ratings, as decades of research show a direct connection between family involvement and student achievement.

Concerns with Aspects of HB 4:

I am concerned about HB 4 continuing to overemphasize the STAAR exam. A single, high-stakes, one-day test is an unreliable indicator of student learning and should not dominate accountability ratings.

I also oppose outcomes-based funding models tied to standardized test results. Such models disproportionately harm economically disadvantaged schools, encourage teaching to the test, and penalize campuses for circumstances beyond their control. Public education funding must support long-term success, not reinforce inequities.

Recent Legal Developments:

Recent court decisions have highlighted ongoing instability in the accountability system. In April 2025, the Texas 15th Court of Appeals ruled that TEA could move forward with issuing 2022–2023 ratings, despite significant concerns about the retroactive application of new CCMR standards. Districts saw ratings drop based on changes made after the fact, undermining trust and complicating improvement planning. TEA remains blocked from issuing 2023–2024 ratings due to unresolved lawsuits involving STAAR grading practices, including the use of artificial intelligence. This uncertainty shows the urgent need for a stable, transparent, and fair accountability system.

Conclusion:

I respectfully urge the Committee to:

- Support HB 4 provisions that use multiple indicators, recognize family engagement, and prepare students for life beyond high school.
- Oppose reliance on STAAR as the primary measure, outcomes-based funding models, and sudden accountability changes that disrupt schools' ability to plan and improve.

Our students, teachers, and families deserve an accountability system that truly reflects their hard work and potential, not one distorted by unstable or punitive measures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Farrar-Kakashvili

Savannah, TX

Rachel Stockton
Self
Fort Worth, TX

STAAR is ridiculous. The “pass rate” gets lower and lower every year. How is a student getting a 36 on a test passing? This must mean the test is too hard for the majority of students. STAAR is not about student academic growth, but about politicians getting their pockets lined with cash. Also, third grade is too young to have this high stakes testing begin. Students are developing real anxiety about these pointless tests, and it’s wrong. Not to mention on test day that students have to be silent for eight hours straight. It turns our schools into prisons. We should want students to love coming to school, not dread preparing for this test all year long, and then to be checked out for the last month to month and a half of school because what they’ve been learning for all year is over. If you want to more adequately gauge student academic growth look into other options such as learning portfolios/projects that are happening in other states. Feel free to contact me, an educator with nine years of service, if you would like to brainstorm further ideas of what can be done to better show what our students know. Thank you for your consideration.

Teresa Chardola, Mrs.
Self
Katy, TX

I am against HB 4 as it is unfair to public schools and teachers.

Adam Stiles
Self/Service Coordinator
Austin, TX

Oppose

Kristen Harris
Self
Mckinney, TX

This assessment system is, like most things coming out of this legislature, set up to make schools fail. It is unfair, especially for title 1 schools. We know the goal is to make all schools fail so they can be privatized, and this is just one of those ways. Speak to the people actually in the schools about what they’re dealing with. Fully fund them. Pay teachers what they deserve. Help them find ways to overcome what cell phones have done to children (created dopamine addicts), and give districts whatever they need to serve their communities the way only they know how to do that. Stop being a roadblock.

Kristin Glass, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Good evening. I am an educator in the Fort Worth-Arlington area. I oppose HB4. The bill does not, in fact, do away with STAAR. It merely shortens it a bit. Schools are currently being held accountable for scores and factors (such as COVID impacts on lower socio-economic schools) after the fact. Despite all the money and time spent on STAAR, as well as punishing schools, there have not been significant improvements in outcomes. It appears that you cannot test and punish your way into good schools. It is time for a different, effective solution (and no, vouchers/ESAs are definitely not the answer either!)

I ask that you oppose this bill; hold schools harmless for past scores, with a restart in 2024-25; and use new test scores the 1st year for informational and validation purposes only (as there has not been time for testing, validation and transition, as in the past).

Thank you for your time and service.

Amy Howe

Self

Hurst, TX

Get rid of the STAAR or have private school students take it also

Peter Toufels

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Don't split the district

Megan Metcalf

Self

Montgomery, TX

Please vote yes in favor of HB 3372.

Gretchen Pierce

self, stay-at-home mom

Austin, TX

I oppose the passage of HB4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. We have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, so it is clear STAAR and the current system has failed the children of Texas. My son will be in 3rd grade next year, and I hope he will not be subjected to this deeply flawed assessment.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements for assessment frequency, and uses a nationally normed assessment, not a state normed assessment, to meet those requirements.

I am also concerned with how the bill doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong, and states should not be punished unfairly for these questionable scores. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results.

Finally, I'm concerned that HB4 gives more and more power to the Commissioner of Education. Again, we have seen little meaningful improvement in results despite spending billions of dollars, punishing schools, and taking over districts. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and even more frustration.

HB 4 should not pass unless significant changes are made.

Anna Nichols

Self

Rusk, TX

As this bill is written, I do not support it as an educator in Texas nor do I support it as a parent of children educated in public school. A single person should not hold this much authority over something that holds so much weight for our schools. I am also concerned this bill would require more assessment of students that continue to give data that can not be effectively used to drive instruction in the classroom.

Holly Gorman
Self, Texas Parent
AUSTIN, TX

We all agree that there are serious problems with STAAR and that we have an urgent need to revamp the testing and accountability system. After spending billions of taxpayer dollars over the past decade, we have seen virtually no gains in reading or math outcomes. This is clear evidence that STAAR has failed the children of Texas, and it's time we admitted that. The proposed changes do nothing to alleviate the high-stakes pressure of the test or the incentives for educators to "teach to the test" rather than ensure students have well-rounded mastery of concepts.

I'm asking you to rewrite this bill to require the assessment frequency required by federal law using one of the federally approved nationally normed instruments already in use by other states.

HB4 also doubles down on punishing schools based on the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just last Thursday, the newly released 2022–23 scores showed a staggering 233% increase in F ratings across the state — a clear indication that something is terribly wrong. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results. Districts were right to sound the alarm. We should be supporting our schools through recovery, not punishing them.

I respectfully ask that you reset the timeline, using the 2024–25 school year as a fresh start, and discard the flawed data from the past two years.

I'm also deeply concerned that HB4 concentrates even more power in the hands of the Commissioner of Education. After more than a decade of ever-increasing centralized control, testing, and district takeovers, the results across Texas have not meaningfully improved. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and even more frustration.

You cannot test and punish your way into strong public schools. It's time to stop doubling down on a system that has failed and refocus on what matters: truly supporting Texas children, families, and educators. Please listen to the voices of your constituents who are living the reality these policies create. We are counting on your leadership.

Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Alana Ingram
Self educator
Vidor, TX

I am against HB 4.

Kelsey Wise
self
Lewisville, TX

Members of the Texas Legislature,
HB4 is being presented as a step forward in education, but what it actually is — a repackaging of tired, test-driven policies that do little to benefit students and everything to punish schools serving our most vulnerable communities.

The performance-obsessed, one-size-fits-all systems are clearly not working. This bill doesn't address inequity, it reinforces it. You cannot measure student growth, school success, or teacher effectiveness with a single test score, and yet HB4 continues to push that flawed narrative.

We don't need more pressure. We need policy rooted in reality — in research, in equity, and in respect for the people doing the work. I cannot stress that last part enough! When was the last time you taught in a classroom? Stepped foot in a classroom? My door is always open for visitors because it is important that you see the reality.

I urge you to stop wasting taxpayer money on expanding punitive systems and start investing in what actually works: smaller student-to-teacher ratios, culturally responsive curriculum, and community-rooted solutions.

If the goal is student success, HB4 is not the answer. It's another distraction from the real work. Do better — because our students and educators deserve better. My students deserve better. I deserve better.

Thank you,
Kelsey Wise

Kellie Pringle
Self
Arlington, TX

I strongly oppose this bill not only as an educator but also as a parent of students in public education. There is no place for unelected individuals to have complete authority over public education/testing. In addition, the testing already being done to students is a complete misrepresentation of their skills and abilities. Not only should TEA NOT have the oversight and decision making this bill would allow, the testing and accountability ratings need a complete overhaul and that needs to include the feedback and oversight of current public school teachers. This bill would in no way shape or form benefit students, teachers/educators or our state. There is no justification for TEA to have this level of authority and autonomy in these areas. Should this bill be passed, this would result in even further decline in the effectiveness of public education...which many constituents are starting to believe is the whole idea. You face a more likely chance of being voted out by said constituents if these kinds of bills continue to find their way to the committee and floors.

Katie Shaw
Arlington ISD
Fort Worth, TX

I'm an Arlington ISD teacher of 22 years. I fully believe in assessing our students to show mastery and growth but PLEASE do not let this be so unattainable that no one, or at least not many, could ever meet it. Please consider using educators who are currently in the classroom on panels to help create testing in school accountability. We need people who have dedicated their lives and understand the cognitive ability of each grade level at least assisting in the making of questions to ensure that they are adequate for our kids. My elementary is thriving and has the most amazing teachers. We tend to score in the top of our district and even the state, but it's getting harder and harder than more than the accountability changes. I would love it if you guys changed. I would love it if law makers and people who are directly involved in this would change their mindset to a how can we celebrate public schools and show that our students are meeting benchmarks instead of making it a gotcha situation. Thank you for your time.

Julie Long
Self, teacher
Cypress, TX

Please, as a resident, parent, and educator, vote against HB 4. The State Board of Education, not TEA and its appointed representatives, should determine statewide standardized testing instruments, as well as which scores are passing. School districts should not be forced to pay for challenging their ratings in court. Nor should previously imposed interventions and sanctions against districts continue if they are in the process of being legally challenged.

Sabrina Ball
self
Fort Worth, TX

The state has continued to OVERBURDEN our students. I have two teens who have been harmed by the state of Texas already. This is BIG government. Buckley needs to GET OUT of our public schools. Just say NO to Buckley in Public Schools.

Karen Anderson
Red Oak ISD
Red Oak, TX

Please vote no!

Brittany Thomas
Self
Lewisville, TX

As an educator, I am opposed to this bill. This bill is deceiving

Marisela Aramino, Mrs.
Self
Mansfield, TX

I oppose.

Brianna Jones
Self - Teacher
New Braunfels, TX

I am strongly against this bill. It penalizes school districts for taking legal action against the state or its officials. This effectively discourages districts from defending themselves through legal channels, even when the state creates policies that may be harmful towards students, teachers, or local education systems. Teachers often must rely on their districts to challenge unjust or harmful state mandates. Silencing that voice could prevent meaningful reform or protection. Texas has a strong tradition of local control in education. This bill appears to shift power further toward state officials by punishing local districts that disagree with or challenge state actions. We teachers, who work directly under district leadership, may find our concerns less likely to be addressed if our districts are afraid to push back on harmful state policies. The proposal reads as a form of retaliation, using sanctions as a threat to discourage litigation or opposition. This undermines the idea of government accountability and the legal right to dispute decisions through proper channels. The bill seems to conflict with constitutional protections related to due process and the right to petition the government to address legitimate grievances. As a public servant, I support upholding these rights at all levels of government, and this bill is in direct opposition of that principle.

Rachel Mitchell

Self

Allen, TX

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on HB 4.

While HB 4 claims to “streamline” and “improve” assessments in public schools, the reality is that this bill increases state control while silencing the voices of our local school districts. It punishes schools for defending their students and communities, limits their ability to seek legal recourse, and hands even more power to politicians in Austin — not educators or families.

We need real accountability that helps students learn, not a political system that protects the state from being challenged when it fails our kids. HB 4 opens the door for even more state overreach into local schools while pretending to support instruction.

I believe in a Texas where education decisions are made by local educators who know their students best — not by bureaucrats more focused on politics than classrooms.

Please stand with parents, teachers, and students — not political power grabs.
Vote NO on HB 4.

Emma Luckemeyer

Self, teacher

New Braunfels, TX

I oppose HB 4 because of the power it gives to the education commissioner as it relates to testing and accountability. It is not right for schools to be rated based on criteria that changes after the fact. It also takes power away from local school districts and consolidates it at the state level.

Ramon Telles Jr

self-Instructional Designer

Austin, TX

I am writing to you to oppose the passage of HB4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. Given that we have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, it is time to admit that STAAR and the current testing and accountability system has failed the children of Texas.

HB4 also doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong with the way that the state is manipulating test results and that school districts were right in stopping their release. Because of the COVID learning loss that hit most heavily on low-income children and English Language Learners, as well as the way the TEA has moved goalposts after the game has been played, I believe that we should support and not punish schools suddenly facing severe sanctions. Let's restart the timeline with the 2024-25 school year and not use the questionable scores from the past two years to punish schools unfairly.

I'm also concerned that HB4 gives more and more power to the TEA. It looks to me like the billions spent on testing over the past decade, as well as punishing schools and taking over districts, has resulted in little to no improvement in results across the state. You can't test and punish your way into great public schools. It is time to focus on supporting kids and teachers again.

Courtney Baker, Mrs

Self-NISD

Haslet, TX

As a public school educator and parent, I'm deeply troubled by the direction House Bill 4 is taking. This bill removes oversight from our elected State Board of Education and hands it to an appointed Commissioner, which risks putting politics above students. It also cuts back on transparency around changes to testing and accountability, leaving teachers and students in the dark. In our district, we work hard to prepare students for success without teaching to the test — but even then, students deserve to know what they're walking into. Finally, I'm alarmed by how the bill seems designed to silence school districts that speak up, threatening their autonomy and local control. We need thoughtful, student-centered reform — not rushed legislation that reduces trust, transparency, and local voices.

Hannah Jala

self/former public school teacher

Austin, TX

I urge the committee to OPPOSE the passage of HB4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. Given that we have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, it is time to admit that STAAR and the current testing and accountability system has failed the children of Texas.

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I'm also concerned that HB4 gives more and more power to the TEA. It looks to me like the billions spent on testing over the past decade, as well as pushing schools and taking over districts, has resulted in little to no improvement in results across the state. You can't test and punish your way into great public schools. It is time to focus on supporting kids and teachers again.

Francesca Talbert

self

Wylie, TX

I am opposed to HB 4 as written. This bill expands the power of the TEA commissioner and takes it away from the elected State Board of Education. It allows the TEA commissioner to create or choose the assessments, decide if the test is reliable, set guidelines for school ratings, and decide to take over an entire schools district for not meeting the standards he personally set. This is entirely too much power for an unelected position without any oversight.

Sarah Rivlin
self, former teacher
Houston, TX

I ask you to oppose HB 4, the school accountability bill. As it is now, the appointed commissioner of the TEA has used his power to artificially lower A-F ratings of the vast majority of Texas public school districts, making it easier for disastrous state takeovers to happen in the future. As a former teacher in Houston ISD, I have watched this commissioner overreach his power to take control away from a democratically elected school board and replace it with a rubber-stamping board of managers that has sat back and allowed the appointed commissioner's choice of superintendent to both destroy the district's finances and drive 42% of teachers and 10,000 employees out of the district after just one school year. Because of the commissioner's manipulation of the A-F rating system, my school, which was just in range of becoming a B-rated school, was rated a D-. The superintendent used this arbitrary score as an excuse to take over my school and force teachers to read from bad, AI-designed PowerPoint slides rather than actually teaching our students. If I had stayed, I would have been required to use a timer and move on to the next slide even if my students didn't understand a concept. Because I didn't want to teach under these conditions, I resigned and my 16-year career as a teacher ended. HISD is currently driving away so many teachers that it is having to replace them with uncertified teachers. I have heard of at least two 19-year-old college students employed as teachers of record. I don't understand how minor (and often manipulated) gains in STAAR test scores can excuse this level of destruction. Why would the commissioner need even more power over the accountability system? If you are conservative, you should be concerned about placing so much power in the hands of a centralized governmental agency. Why does the TEA commissioner need so much more power? Finally, "through testing" will increase time wasted on testing and test prep. Even "low stakes" testing can become high stakes when it is used to rate and rank students, teachers, schools, and school districts. Why wouldn't teachers feel the need to prep their kids for each and every "through test" when so much is at stake? Please oppose this unnecessary and obviously destructive bill. What has the TEA commissioner done to earn so much trust?

Vixtoria Dimock
Self
Round Rock, TX

If the requirements of this bill applies only to public schools, it must include private schools as well. If there are no measures of accountability for private schools, how will the state know if they are educating students to the standards we expect public schools to meet. How will parents know if the tuition they are paying to private schools is providing a quality education. Stop putting so much regulation on public schools that they can't educate children.

Chanelle Clerc
Self
Houston, TX

Hello,
Please oppose HB 4. I have had a child in HISD since the TEA takeover. Since that time our teachers and principles have left or been unfairly removed, our students have been subjected to a deficient curriculum, our libraries have been removed. Our maintenance staff reduced while our facilities are in disrepair. Neighborhood schools have been closed. All while our elected officials have been removed. This is not democratic and I dare you to justify that this is in anyway helping our community. It is producing harm that will last generations. I do not agree with taxation without representation. Please do not vote for HB4. Thank you.

Traci Dunlap
Self/Teacher
Austin, TX

My name is Traci Dunlap, and I'm a veteran public school teacher with 37 years in the classroom. I am in opposition to HB 4.

This bill would give more power to the unelected TEA Commissioner, and make TEA, not the State Board of Education, the administrator of assessment rules. It would also allow the TEA Commissioner to change the metrics retroactively, which is not fair to students or educators.

This bill would also force school districts to foot the cost of challenging A - F ratings in court, and allow any sanctions against districts to continue throughout the injunction period if such ratings are challenged.

Please focus on supporting our public schools, which 5.5 million Texas children attend, and stop passing legislation meant to punish and undermine educators and schools.

Diana Candida
self - parent and sales person
Houston, TX

Please vote against this bill. Houston ISD was taken over by the state and it is causing terrible harm to our schools, teachers, and students. We lost 43% of our teachers last year with more leaving this year. This bill makes it easier for the commissioner to take over districts.

It is a bad idea to have the TEA the administrator of testing and assessment rules. Our students already have too many assessments. In Houston, the numbers and who is allowed to take them is being fudged to make it look like Mike Miles is doing better than he is. Students are losing opportunities that they should've had access to because of what he's doing. The takeover of Houston ISD is terrible and we don't want others to be subjected to the same.

Please vote against this bill.

Thank you,
Diana

Monica Magoon
self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to HB 4 as written. This bill expands the power of the TEA commissioner and takes it away from the elected State Board of Education. It allows the TEA commissioner to create or choose the assessments, decide if the test is reliable, set guidelines for school ratings, and decide to take over an entire schools district for not meeting the standards he personally set. This is entirely too much power for an unelected position without any oversight.

Brianna Madruga

self

Austin, TX

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HB4 also doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong with the way that the state is manipulating test results and that school districts were right in stopping their release. Because of the COVID learning loss that hit most heavily on low-income children and English Language Learners, as well as the way the TEA has moved goalposts after the game has been played, I believe that we should support and not punish schools suddenly facing severe sanctions. Let's restart the timeline with the 2024-25 school year and not use the questionable scores from the past two years to punish schools unfairly.

I'm also concerned that HB4 gives more and more power to the TEA. It looks to me like the billions spent on testing over the past decade, as well as pushing schools and taking over districts, has resulted in little to no improvement in results across the state. You can't test and punish your way into great public schools. It is time to focus on supporting kids and teachers again. Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Anderson

self

Benbrook, TX

While shortening the STAAR test may sound like a step in the right direction, this bill raises serious concerns. A shorter test could inadvertently increase the chances of failure for students by reducing their opportunity to demonstrate what they know. More importantly, HB 4 expands state authority over local school districts, lowering the threshold for state intervention and paving the way for takeovers that could remove locally elected school board members. This undermines local control and democratic accountability.

Although I have long questioned the value of the STAAR test, I recognize that changing it is costly and places additional burdens on teachers and schools. Rather than spending limited resources on redesigning or shortening a flawed testing system, I urge you to invest in what actually improves student outcomes: high-quality instruction. Tests do not raise achievement—teaching does.

Please reject this bill and instead focus on supporting educators, respecting local governance, and strengthening classroom learning.

Michael Killalea

Indivisible 1431

Lago Vista, TX

HB is a huge overreach by the state of Texas that impinges on local school districts' ability to operate independently. The bill expands the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) authority to take over school districts, increasing the risk of state-appointed managers replacing elected school boards. This further erodes local control and gives the state more power to override educators and communities.

One of the most alarming provisions prohibits school districts from using state funds to challenge education policies in court. This prevents educators and parents from fighting back against harmful state mandates, stripping schools of their right to defend themselves.

BILL KING

self - retired judge

Austin, TX

Representatives, This bill is cart before the horse. Perhaps it would make more sense for the State to FULLY fund the public schools first before adding more unfunded mandates and increasing scrutiny. It's almost as if the State is intentionally starving the public schools so that they can not do their job, thus requiring The State masters to step in to "save" the schools. Pure hypocrisy.

Lauren Zentz

self

HOUSTON, TX

As it is currently written HB4 expands the ability of the commissioner to take over districts, expands year-round testing, and overall, gives more power to the appointed commissioner and less power to the elected State Board of Education.

I continue to be dismayed by the actions of the Republican party in this state as they seek repeatedly to turn this state into a dictatorship populated by people who can't think and just say yes to everything they want. Educators and students need support - not more tests, and not power consolidated into the hands of an unelected right-hand man to the not so benevolent dictatorial governor we are currently suffering under. This is yet another Republican power grab, and all should vote against any proposed legislation that would enable them to consolidate even more power.

Karen Santhanam

self

Cedar Park, TX

I oppose HB4. It unnecessarily gives TEA too much power over schools. School districts are already accountable to their constituents and do not need additional burdens. Vote NO on HB4.

Mary Ellen Scribner, Ms

Self - Retired PreK-12 librarian and high school English/History teacher

Austin, TX

I am opposed to HB 4 or at least its current criteria for evaluating public school accountability. Like so many bills being written and considered in the 89th session, its intent is to judge and punish rather than to evaluate and improve. Rather than using a more holistic rubric in assessing a school's program, performance, and progress, it relies on a single standardized test to rate a very complex organism. The student component of that organism is anything but standardized. Even if it were possible to come up with one test that was in any way fair to the variety of cultures and abilities in our schools, it appears that the TEA can no only be depended on to use the results in equitable and honest ways. Changing the rules after the game has been played hardly reflects ethical intent. We need a more holistic rubric for "judging" our schools and more ethical "judges" who will guide improvement rather than mete out punishment. Throw this baby out with the bath water and give us a realistic rubric for assessing our schools.

Ray Pieniazek

Agriculture Teachers Assoc

Adkins, TX

Please consider the fact that we should be measuring schools by criterion that includes all aspects of a school not just a one day one time test. How in the world can a 3rd grader know how to type a written document. Our schools have so many other great things happening in them besides one test.

Richard Faidley
Self -- securities trader
Austin, TX

Please vote against HB 4. As currently constructed, this bill will do scant little to relieve the onerous burden of high-stakes testing that has left our educators "teaching to the test" for the past couple decades.

I am also concerned that the bill expands TEA's ability to take control of school districts, thereby eroding local control and bypassing our elected local leaders. Furthermore, the bill prohibits districts from using their state funds to challenge education policies in court, another loss of school district power in favor of the TEA.

The changes envisioned in HB 4 will do nothing to improve student outcomes. What we really need to help our public schools is to address their chronic underfunding and lack of resources.

thank you!

Jessica Evans
Self/parent
Houston, TX

Please give more power to the state elected school board and not to the commissioner or the state. We are living under a state takeover of our school district, and we have seen a diminished quality of curriculum, teachers, extracurriculars, and our educational experience overall. State takeovers, rigid reform, and test prep curriculum do not work and we do not want it. We need to give families and parents a voice and a choice in what kind of school experience they are having. Return the power to families. We want strong and healthy public school systems led by ELECTED school boards. The majority of Republicans and Democrats alike do not want school vouchers. They don't help the average family. We wouldn't need vouchers if we just supported our public school system. People who want private already do that and vouchers aren't enough for quality private schools anyway. We need our state representatives held accountable not our schools. High stakes testing is not the answer. We need more resources and high-quality curriculum. We need BOOKS and LIBRARIES not test prep passages and AI curriculum. High stakes testing is not preparing kids for the future. It's only making a select few rich. Testing and assessment is fine and useful, but we need to revamp how we do that. The test needs to reflect high a well-rounded and high-quality education educational experience. The educational experience does not need to be centered around the test, which is the current reality. State takeovers do not lead to good outcomes long-term. Let's look at the research. Let's do what works. Let's put kids first. Parental empowerment/choice does not equal making billionaires richer. Do what's right for kids. This is a bipartisan issue and vouchers are not popular. Ignore us at your own peril. We will remember when we vote. If you want an example of what NOT to do look at Mike Miles and HISD. The only people he has convinced of his success are business people who do not have kids in HISD and outside entities. The people experiencing his system, including my kids and my community do not like it. Bring back books, engaging curriculum, teacher support, LISTEN TO PARENTS NOT BILLIONAIRES. Your constituents both Republican and Democrat are watching you. I repeat do the right thing. If you wouldn't want it for your kid, don't impose it on our kids.

Dvorah Cristol
Cristol Law, PLLC
FORT WORTH, TX

HB 4 isn't about helping students — it's about politicians grabbing more control over Texas public schools.

HB 4 would force local school districts into silence, block their ability to fight back when the state fails them, and place more power into the hands of bureaucrats who have already neglected our kids.

It even expands the Attorney General's power to target schools that try to hold the state accountable.

Our schools deserve real solutions, not political punishment. Texas students deserve better.

Christine Hurley

Self

Houston, TX

I am writing in strong opposition to Texas HB4. This bill, like others in recent years, gives more power to the Texas Education Agency — a body that has repeatedly shown it is not up to the task of responsibly managing our schools, let alone expanding its reach. The recent takeover of Houston ISD is a glaring example of the TEA's failure, not a justification for more authority.

The HISD takeover has caused chaos, demoralized educators, and undermined local democracy. Instead of support, we've seen top-down mandates, erratic decisions, and the dismantling of programs that once served our students well. Teachers are leaving. Students are confused and underserved. Families feel powerless. The damage is real and visible. If this is what TEA control looks like, why on earth would we give them more?

Let's be honest: the TEA has not earned the trust of Texans. It has not shown transparency, consistency, or compassion. The agency seems more focused on control and optics than on real, measurable outcomes for students. The HB4 expansion isn't about helping kids — it's about consolidating power. And the people who suffer the most are the students, especially in marginalized communities.

This bill does not represent a thoughtful solution to the complex issues our schools face. It represents a shortcut to political control over local education. Parents and educators are being silenced. Elected school boards are being bypassed. And instead of investing in our teachers, facilities, and mental health resources, we're watching the state funnel resources into bureaucracy and blame-shifting.

Education in Texas doesn't improve by putting more power into the hands of an agency that has already failed its test. The TEA has proven it can destabilize districts — not support them. Until that changes, expanding its authority is not just misguided — it's dangerous.

Please reject HB4. Our children, our teachers, and our communities deserve better.

Liz Silva

Myself

Houston, TX

Hello,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB4.

As a parent with two students in one of the New Education System (NES) schools under Mike Miles, and as the PTO President at that school, I have seen firsthand how harmful state takeovers can be to student well-being and their love of learning. What looks like "reform" from the outside often feels like disruption, instability, and a loss of voice for families and educators inside the schools. Not to mention, students as young as first grade in these schools are over-tested daily.

HB4 would further expand the commissioner's power to take over districts and impose rigid mandates—like year-round testing—without input from the communities most affected. It diminishes the authority of the elected State Board of Education and hands even more control to an appointed individual who is not accountable to voters.

Our children deserve better. They deserve schools that nurture their growth, not systems obsessed with test data. They deserve local leaders who know their communities not distant appointees making sweeping decisions. Especially leaders that refuse to hear community concerns, collaborate or compromise when families are begging to be part of the solution in Houston ISD work for all of its students and schools.

Please vote NO on HB4. Our public schools need support, not state overreach.

Sincerely,

Liz Silva

Parent & PTO President

Crockett Elementary, Houston TX

Ana Luisa Salas-Porras

SELF

Austin, TX

I strongly oppose HB4. This bill does not promote accountability in schools. It will only result in more interference & control from the TEA. I support school districts to make the choices necessary for their students. More TEA involvement is not the answer. FULLY FUND public schools & each district can implement the programs needed & make the best possible choices for the needs of their districts. Please VOTE NO.

Elizabeth Walters

Self/student

Fort Worth, TX

My name is Elizabeth Walters and I am a graduate of Texas Public Schools.

I am opposed to HB 4 as written. This bill expands the power of the TEA commissioner and takes it away from the elected State Board of Education.

It allows the TEA commissioner to create or choose the assessments, decide if the test is reliable, set guidelines for school ratings, and decide to take over an entire schools district for not meeting the standards he personally set. This is entirely too much power for an unelected position without any oversight.

Susan Hall

self; retired teacher

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill for the very reason that our state does NOT NEED one more school accountability measure in place. The state of Texas already has laws in place that regulate and oversee our public school system. Our public school system is not broken. It is underfunded and undersupported. Putting one more restrictive, domineering oversight system in place for the public school system would be redundant and restraining for school districts working every day to improve their schools. Let the schools handle the communities they serve. Isn't that what this administration is supposedly all about...LESS GOVERNMENT? This just adds more government watchdogs to our already heavily regulated school system. Try to let the laws you have already passed do their work please. Vote no and oppose this dumb bill.

Tracy Johnson

DFER TX

Austin, TX

For example, while student extracurricular participation is shown to improve student performance and belonging, programs are not always widely available to every school. In fact, extracurriculars are usually funded out of optional, additional tax revenue or philanthropic efforts. Districts with access to these types of resources will likely have higher property values and parents with the expendable resources necessary to fund such programs. Therefore, an accountability system that rewards this input is rewarding inequity embedded within the system.

We recognize an opportunity for the Committee to consider additional indicators to include in the A&A system that are more than just “one test, one day”; we support these efforts as long as they remain outcomes-focused and achievable by all, regardless of property wealth.

3. An A&A system that is transparent, inclusive of disaggregated data that informs both instructional practices and state and local policymaking decisions, and drives student improvement.

Perhaps the most transformative impact of an effective A&A system is its ability to drive large-scale systemic change to chronically underperforming schools. Disaggregated data on race, household income, and disability status provides invaluable insight and information on how the system is or is not serving those students. Additionally, transparency around this information to parents and the public prompts policymakers and school leaders to allocate resources, utilize or adjust best practices, and set new goals to elevate outcomes for these students. Without this information available on a consistent and reliable basis, students that need support the most suffer.

Since its inception, Texas’ A&A system has been consistently disrupted either due to a worldwide pandemic, administrative adjustments, or litigation. As the Committee considers how to make the system more consistent and transparent, we encourage policies that provide for advance notice of changes to districts for fair implementation, require strong public and district input, and distribute results widely to parents and communities on a regular, annual basis.

Closing

A productive and meaningful assessment and accountability system is not, and is never intended to be, a fool-proof solution to “fixing” education; instead, it is information that ensures we are actively working to “raise the bar” on student learning and progress. It focuses on the most important part of our state’s education system: ensuring students can read, write, and think critically for the advancement and betterment of our society and economy.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide public comment on HB 4, and look forward to future collaboration to further maximize HB 4’s impact on Texas students, educators, and families. Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations, your continued support for Texas students, and for your dedication to improving public education in Texas.

(2/2)

Tracy Johnson

DFER TX

Austin, TX

Democrats for Education Reform Texas (DFER TX) provides written testimony ON House Bill 4 (HB 4), both as filed and as substituted. As the Committee deliberates both old and new approaches to the state's assessment and accountability system, we urge you to remain centered on prioritizing a system that is equitable, transparent, and data-driven.

Why It Matters: The Role of Assessment and Accountability to Ensure Equity in Education

A strong, effective assessment and accountability (A&A) system can have profound effects on transforming education for our most vulnerable students. In fact, research has shown that a standards-based, outcomes-focused A&A system primarily benefits Black, Hispanic, and low-income students, who - in the absence of such a system - can remain invisible and ignored in crucial policymaking decisions. Key components of such a system involve the following principles:

1. An assessment system that is standards-based; i.e., criterion-referenced instead of norm-referenced.

It is imperative to the long-term success of historically underserved students that the state's A&A system retain a criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) as opposed to a norm-referenced assessment (NRA). CRAs measure students in their individual ability to meet standards and skills; NRAs measure students in their relative performance to each other. Because of this, NRAs not only contain a considerable amount of biases that can actually hurt students of color, but they also set up scenarios in which students could actually be mastering course content, yet still marked as underperforming.

While the state's current assessment system must be reformed to reduce its "high-stakes" nature, we encourage the Committee to consider learnings from current pilot programs that shift the system to a through-year model that informs instruction, rather than completely jeopardizing the integrity of the assessment itself.

2. An accountability system that prioritizes outcomes, rather than a set of prescriptive, inequitably distributed inputs.

Our local public schools are innovative, resourceful, and responsive to the needs of their students and families. Under our current A&A system, schools have the flexibility to deliver a set of educational options and programs to best improve outcomes; that is, student achievement and growth. When the A&A system begins to move away from outcomes to instead allow emphasis on a variety of inputs (such as course offerings and extracurricular programming), the system is not only inadvertently prescribing certain district decisionmaking over others, but also rewarding practices that cannot be widely available across all systems due to funding and availability of resources.

(1/2)

Karen McKenzie, Ms

Self

Fort Worth, TX

The country was established on separation of church and state and religious freedom. We do not need to incorporate religion and public schools.

Claudia Martinez

Self

San Antonio, TX

Vote no. You represent us and our taxes pay your salary.

Susan Kelly

Self; Retired Journalist

Austin, TX

I oppose HB 4 and encourage you to reject this bill. Thank you.

Hearing Date: April 29, 2025 8:00 AM

Samantha Kinsey

Self

Victoria, TX

The assessment of students through testing is unfair and not a good determination of how much a student has learned. I, myself, had to take state assessments. Every year, my scores were average. However, my grades showed that I was an above average student. I graduated with a 4.2 gpa and was number 8 in my class of over 250 students. I went on to do well in college and was the first in my family to graduate with a degree. I say all this to show that students should not be judged on their test scores. Some students are bad test takers, and some students have extreme test anxiety. Students should be learning the material and how to apply that to real life. We should be teaching our students critical thinking, not memorization for a test. Also, when a student does not "meet" the average for the STAAR exam, the student is subject to more tutoring. This tutoring is done during school hours. My daughter, who struggles in math, did poorly on the STAAR test a few years ago. She was then taken from her math class (the class she struggles in and now had to make up work on her own) to receive STAAR tutoring. This tutoring session only covered test questions. It did not cover the material she was supposed to be currently learning. This meant she was now able to pass the STAAR from the previous year, but she did poorly on the current years STAAR. This testing system keeps our students stagnant in their learning. Please consider abolishing testing as an assessment of our students in Texas.

Kathy Hunt

Self

Victoria, TX

While I firmly believe in accountability the current A - F ranking process used in Texas is grossly unfair and a travesty. As a former educator I have sat through many sessions on the calculations behind the Domains and it is a biased, crazy statistical mess. I stand with parents, educators, and business and community members in saying one test on one day is a horrible and dehumanizing way to assess student, teacher, school, and district performance.

Using STAAR test results as the primary measure is deceiving when the weighting is heavily on economically disadvantaged and special education students results and is at best a reflection of zip code. At least high school gives a bit more realistic measure by including CCMR metrics. Too bad schools were judged on this when the criteria wasn't even in place from TEA during past school years so they had no chance to have programs in place and mostly were penalized.

Please consider other metrics in the A - F rankings as proposed by education professionals and organizations such as Raise Your Hand Texas. Support the whole child and campus/district by including advanced academics, extracurriculars, parent engagement, other career and college readiness, and practical life skills in the calculation.

Since you all gave in to the Governor and his cronies on vouchers (aka ESAs) I and many others also request any school taking voucher money MUST have their students take the STAAR and not be allowed to choose their own test. If STAAR is good enough for our public schools children it is good enough for those in private and parochial schools. Let's compare apples to apples before non-public schools brag about how much better they are.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts to improve Texas public education.

Meridith Chesson

Self

Rockport, TX

HB 4 The STAAR test should be eliminated because it fails to accurately measure a child's true knowledge and academic progress. The reading passages often test well above grade level, making it an unfair assessment for many students. Additionally, the focus on STAAR preparation promotes rote memorization rather than meaningful learning. The administration of the test wastes valuable instructional days that could be better spent on genuine education. Moreover, the STAAR test is extraordinarily expensive, and the millions of dollars spent on it each year could be far better allocated toward educational tools and resources that truly support student growth and success.

Kelly Pyron

Self

Odessa, TX

The STAAR is a huge waste of tax payer money and is a terrible way to assess students. As a teacher, we assess students throughout the year in many different ways. Using one test, on one day does not give an accurate accounting of student growth and ability.

Doreen Martinez, Dr.

Self

Katy, TX

I am a public educator with 30+ years of experience as a teacher and an administrator and I am a product of public education. I am opposed to any type or form of a school voucher that will take away funds from public schools. The majority of our Texas children are in public schools. We educate every child who enters our schools, and we meet them where they are and prepare them for the next level. We need our public funds to educate our children and it's time to take a stand for public education. The Texas Legislature had a HB 3 hearing today. They invited people both for and against vouchers. I encourage you to review the information from the hearing. It's time to step up and defend our public schools! We cannot allow our state to defund public education! Our Texas children deserve a high quality education from our public schools. The reality is the vouchers will not be able to cover the total cost of a private school, children in rural areas won't have access to private schools, and most of the money will go to the large cities in Texas. How does school vouchers ensure equitable access to all Texas children? It doesn't!

Santana Saldivar, Ms.

Self/Mother

Fort Worth, TX

The recent decision by the Keller ISD school board to expel 25,000 students from North Fort Worth-representing 70% of the district-raises significant concerns. For over 40 years, taxpayers in North Fort Worth have contributed to essential projects, such as a stadium, a career center, and a natatorium, all located within Keller's city limits. This decision appears to prioritize the interests of Keller residents while leaving the residents of North Fort Worth to carry the associated financial burden.

Should Keller ISD proceed with this plan, it may establish a precedent that could affect other districts in the future. We must ensure that the voices and rights of ALL taxpayers are respected.

Suzanne Danhof

Self

Denton, TX

My name is Suzanne Danhof and I am providing testimony ON HB 4. I appreciate the efforts to make statewide assessments more instructionally supportive, more reflective of what's actually happening in classrooms, and less burdensome for students and teachers. Giving districts flexibility in scheduling assessments and reducing the emphasis on multiple-choice questions moves us in the right direction. These are important steps toward building an accountability system that better measures student learning instead of just test-taking ability.

But there are also parts of this bill that give me serious concern — not because I oppose accountability, but because I care deeply about the health and stability of our public schools.

This bill makes it extremely difficult for districts to raise legitimate concerns when they believe a state action is harmful or oversteps legal authority. Penalizing districts financially for challenging decisions — and even opening the door to interventions like conservatorship just for seeking judicial review — creates a chilling effect. It doesn't just silence lawsuits; it silences voices. It tells local schools and their communities that if they disagree, their only choice is to quietly accept it, even when students are impacted.

We need strong assessment systems. We also need strong, stable schools that are able to advocate for their students without fear of punishment.

I urge you to keep the positive momentum around assessment reform but reconsider the punitive measures against districts. Our public education system — and the students and families it serves — deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Susan Anderson, `

self

Benbrook, TX

I support the intent of HB 4 to streamline student assessments and create a system that better supports instruction. Reducing excessive testing will allow more time for meaningful teaching and learning. However, I am concerned about the potential costs of redesigning the exams. It is critical that funding for test revisions does not come at the expense of classroom resources, teacher pay, or student services. Additionally, while streamlining assessments will benefit instruction in the long run, the transition will require adjustments in test preparation that require resources. Please ensure that districts receive the support they need to manage these changes responsibly.

Lucy Frost, MS

Travis County Precinct 336

Manchaca, TX

I oppose this bill. Leave decisions about local public schools to the local ISD.

Flor Flores

Parent

Fort Worth, TX

Require voting, no passage by board

Ryan Kendrick

Myself

Fort Worth, TX

Stop stealing public education funding!

Suraj Batra
Self
Round Rock, TX

I am concerned with how the bill doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong, and states should not be punished unfairly for these questionable scores. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results. We should be supporting our schools through recovery, not punishing them.

I respectfully ask that you reset the timeline, using the 2024–25 school year as a fresh start, and discard the flawed data from the past two years.

Finally, I'm concerned that HB 4 gives more and more power to the Commissioner of Education. Again, we have seen little meaningful improvement in results despite spending billions of dollars, punishing schools, and taking over districts. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and even more frustration.

Please listen to the voices of your constituents who are living the reality these policies create. We are counting on your leadership. Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Thank you for your time and service.

Rita Batra
Self
Round Rock, TX

My name is Rita Batra and I'm a Texan in zip 78664. I am calling to ask the representative to oppose the passage of HB 4 as currently written.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements, and uses a nationally-normed assessment, not a state-normed assessment, to meet those requirements. More importantly, please do not give the TEA any additional power or remove a districts' ability to challenge them in court.

Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Thank you for your time.

Amanda Negron
My kids/self
Fort Worth, TX

I don't approve of this at all every one pays taxes this is not fair at all this is ridiculous are you kidding me how can you even try to do this to kids so sad for this to be even happening cause of house much family's make so disgusting I don't approve at all

Deron Robinson, Dr.

Denton ISD

Denton, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 4. While we have not seen the committee substitute, I write today to express my strong support for the principles and reforms outlined below, particularly its efforts to refocus school district accountability in ways that are more meaningful, transparent, and supportive of student success.

We would support a version of House Bill 4 which would allow for replacing or providing an alternative to the STAAR test with a nationally norm-referenced, through-year progress monitoring system for Math, Reading, and Science. This approach would ensure that assessments are truly focused and meaningful, providing real-time, user-friendly feedback to students, parents, and teachers. Immediate transparency in student progress will empower stakeholders to make timely, informed decisions that directly support learning.

Further, streamlining assessments to meet only the minimum federal testing requirements and eliminating stand-alone writing exams would reduce over-testing and allow teachers to spend more time teaching rather than preparing for tests. This shift would foster deeper learning and alleviate unnecessary pressure on students.

In addition, we strongly support an emphasis on local accountability measures, particularly those focusing on:

- Workforce development at all educational levels
- Early childhood readiness
- Student engagement in extracurricular and co-curricular activities
- Advancement opportunities for high-achieving students
- High-quality teacher development

These local indicators recognize that student success is broader than standardized test scores and reflects the full range of educational experiences that prepare young people for life, work, and citizenship.

In addition, we support any statute to provide clear and predictable implementation of the accountability system. We also support ensuring the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is held accountable for complying with the law as enacted. A strong accountability framework for the TEA will safeguard the integrity of the reforms and ensure that these changes are implemented in a timely and faithful manner.

In sum, we support a version of House Bill 4 that offers an accountability system that is smarter, more supportive of educators, and ultimately more beneficial for students. By focusing on meaningful assessments, local priorities, and responsible implementation, this bill represents a major step forward for Texas public education.

Nikhil Batra, Product Manager

Self

Austin, TX

My name is Nik Batra and I'm a Texan in zip 78664. I am calling to ask the representative to oppose the passage of HB 4 as currently written.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements, and uses a nationally-normed assessment, not a state-normed assessment, to meet those requirements. Also, please do not give the TEA any additional power or remove a districts' ability to challenge them in court.

Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Thank you for your time.

Daniel Selvaggio

Indivisible

Temple, TX

The challenges facing public schools is you, Buckley. Damn near everyone of these bills attacking public schools is coming from you. Why do you hate your constituents and ignore the people of Texas? WE DO NOT WANT ANY MORE ATTACKS ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Your TEA agency is just another tool to attack public education. You continue to push out good people, from superintendents to teachers, to further disenfranchise Texas public education. Shameful, really.

Vote against this bill.

Allison Allison
Self
Fort Worth, TX

The Keller ISD school board trustees decided to detach 70% of the school district. That is 25,000 North Fort Worth students from the school district, despite our community's steadfast support for over 40 years. This board did not run on splitting the district. This is taxation without representation! Taxpayers and voters have invested in vital projects such as a stadium, a career center, and a natatorium, all within Keller city limits. This decision disproportionately favors the residents of Keller, leaving us with debt while still having to pay Keller ISD to use the facilities we funded!

The Texas Education Code allows the board to pursue detachment without a vote, representing an unacceptable gap in our democratic practices. We must make changes to ensure that any resolution regarding detachment is subject to a transparent voting process. Fairness and accountability cannot be optional!

Thank you for recognizing the urgency of this matter. Together, we can protect the rights of all Texas students and taxpayers when a board seeks to detach.

Dawnna Talley, Teacher
Self
Odessa, TX

The STAAR assessment is a tool to gage a students knowledge. It should not be used against the student, teachers, and/or district. We teach differentiation, and urge teachers to not put students in a "box", but that is exactly what this test does. Asking students to write providing evidence from a text and expecting them to use their own connections is expecting students to have the same experiences. This is not a fair assessment of anyone's knowledge.

DeeAnn Foley, Mrs.
Self
Kerrville, TX

I am a retired teacher of 34 years. I was a past Teacher of the Year for Kerrville ISD. Teaching was a passion of mine.
. On assessment and accountability I think testing is important to use for curriculum development. I just think too much emphasis is placed on the results. I think the results should be used to develop curriculum.

. I think parents don't realize that the passing rate is not a 70.

. The test is not developmentally appropriate for the grade level. If teachers sometimes struggle with the answers, it is too difficult for students.

. I like the new requirements of having all testers doing the writing which requires the teaching of writing in all grade levels.

. I am not so sure computer testing is the best way to test. I am old school in thinking paper and pencil is best because it slows the students down. I know it is probably easier to grade but students slow down.

. Behavior is an issue in our schools that needs to be addressed. I believe that this can affect test scores. Thank you for taking the time to read over my concerns.

HEATHER FLETES

Self, teacher and education consultant

Mckinney, TX

It is my professional opinion that we are spending too much time and too much of our budget on testing kids. We need to shorten tests and reinstate time limits. It also seems absurd to me that we would test students earlier in the year again (we had moved tests to May), not because we decided that was best for young Texans, but because vendors were unable to deliver results in a timely fashion. In the private sector, vendors would not be able to get away with this. We are spending instructional time testing kids and cannot even use the data over summer to guide our professional learning or interventions. Testing vendors must provide scores more quickly.

High-stakes testing has reduced writing instruction to one genre for many of the schools that I work with. When you only test one type of writing, which is actually a response to reading, that is what the teachers begin to teach. This is because administrators know how much money is at stake with standardized testing. We need to be teaching kids to do the type of writing that AI is not good at.

Please do the math on how many hours students are spending testing and reduce that number. Give us back time to teach use the money on instruction and intervention rather than paying bug test companies who lobby for contracts.

Testing so much is stealing joy from students, families and teachers in Texas. It is not what should be taking up so much of our time and money.

Hannah Loyd

Self / teacher

Cypress, TX

Public education should be under the control of the ELECTED board not under an appointed member of TEA. Having districts foot the bill of challenging grades just takes more money out of public education.

Julio Saldana

self

El Paso, TX

I am the grandfather of a child with special needs, Dante, who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). I strongly oppose HB 4 because it continues to base school accountability on a single high-stakes test. This system is inadequate, especially for children like Dante who have unique learning needs. One test on one day cannot capture the full growth, effort, and learning of a child. For students with disabilities, this approach is not only unfair, but it also overlooks their progress in areas that matter — academic, social, and emotional development.

Our children are more than just test scores. They are individuals with diverse abilities, and their learning journey is complex. An effective accountability system should reflect all aspects of a child's education, not just their performance on a single exam. I urge you to reject HB 4 and support an accountability system that truly values the whole child — one that includes academic progress, critical thinking, creativity, and the development of essential life skills.

Kimberly Finkelman

Self

Austin, TX

I'm in strong opposition of HB 4 as it is currently written. Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements for assessment frequency and uses a nationally-normed assessment, not a state-normed assessment, to meet those requirements. I am concerned that this bill punishes schools for performance related to the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on the questionable 2022-23 results that were recently released. We should be supporting our schools through recovery with additional funding for highly qualified teachers, instructional materials, and support services - not punishing them. When we punish our schools, we punish our students. I respectfully ask that you reset the timeline, using the 2024-25 school year as a fresh start, and discard the flawed data from the past two post-COVID years.

Finally, I'm concerned that HB 4 gives too much power to the Commissioner of Education. We have seen little meaningful improvement in results despite spending billions of dollars, punishing schools, and taking over districts. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and more frustration. Moving forward with HB 4 will be understood as an attempt to further weaken our public school system. Texas is already one of the most poorly funded public school systems in the country - your time would be better spent focused on solving that state-created problem. Texas can do better than this; it just choosing not to.

Please listen to the voices of your constituents who are living the reality the policies you create. We are counting on your leadership. Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made to address the above listed concerns.

Thank you for your time and service.

Lizzeth Saldana

self

San Antonio, TX

My name is Lizzeth Saldana, and I am the parent of a young child with Down Syndrome who attends public school. I am writing today because the current accountability system based almost entirely on the STAAR test does not reflect the full picture of my son's learning and growth.

My son Dante works hard every day to make academic progress, but his success cannot be measured by a single standardized test score taken on one day. His growth includes learning communication skills, independence, and life skills that the STAAR does not measure. Yet under the current system, schools are graded based only on test scores, creating pressure that discourages inclusive practices and individualized support.

I ask that HB 4 include a broader range of indicators to measure school success — not just STAAR results. Student progress, access to enrichment programs, inclusion of students with disabilities, and the social-emotional development of all children should be valued in how we assess our schools.

Schools should be rewarded for serving all students, including those like Dante, who may not fit into narrow, test-based categories but who are making tremendous strides thanks to their teachers and support staff.

Please reform the accountability system to recognize the whole child, not just a test score. Our children's futures — and the true success of our public schools — depend on it.

Thank you for your time,

Lizzeth Saldana

Amanda Rios-Place

self

Spring, TX

I am against this bill because it would allow the appointed TEA commissioner to design the statewide standardized test, decide if it is valid or reliable, set the cutoff scores, exclude indicators when they wants, and then take over an entire district for not meeting their personally set standards, without any elected oversight.

Nick Gonzales

self

Austin, TX

As currently written, this Bill seems like a power grab for the commissioner of education.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements for assessment frequency, and uses a nationally normed assessment, not a state normed assessment, to meet those requirements.

I am also concerned with how the bill doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong, and states should not be punished unfairly for these questionable scores. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results. We should be supporting our schools through recovery, not punishing them.

Brandie Baker

self

austin, TX

I am writing to oppose the passage of HB 4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. We have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, so it is clear STAAR and the current system has failed the children of Texas.

Please rewrite the bill so that our accountability system reflects only the federal requirements for assessment frequency, and uses a nationally normed assessment, not a state normed assessment, to meet those requirements.

I am also concerned with how the bill doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong, and states should not be punished unfairly for these questionable scores. TEA's manipulation of accountability standards, combined with learning loss disproportionately affecting low-income and English Learner students, makes it fundamentally unfair to impose severe sanctions based on these questionable results. We should be supporting our schools through recovery, not punishing them.

I respectfully ask that you reset the timeline, using the 2024–25 school year as a fresh start, and discard the flawed data from the past two years.

Finally, I'm concerned that HB 4 gives more and more power to the Commissioner of Education. Again, we have seen little meaningful improvement in results despite spending billions of dollars, punishing schools, and taking over districts. Continuing down this path will only place a greater burden on TEA while leaving our communities with fewer local solutions and even more frustration.

Please listen to the voices of your constituents who are living the reality these policies create. We are counting on your leadership. Please vote NO on HB 4 unless significant changes are made.

Thank you for your time and service.

Elizabeth Ayala

Self

El Paso, TX

Mike Johnson

Self

NRH, TX

TEA just released A-F school ratings based on the STAAR test scores when the rules were changed, and the schools were told of those rule changes after the test was administered. How is that accountability? I have also heard from many political leaders in Texas who don't believe the STAAR test is a good measure. I am a teacher, I taught STAAR grades for 11 years, and I can tell you it is not a good measure. We need to get rid of the STAAR test. Then we need to completely start over with the accountability system. Ranking schools with letter grades on standardized test scores is ridiculous. You need to work with teachers, administrators, and parents to put a system in place that works.

Thank you for considering my ideas,

Mike Johnson

Brianna Berry

Self, Human Resource

Austin, TX

Dear House Public Education Committee Member,

I am writing to you to oppose the passage of HB4 as currently written. We have been told that it would get rid of STAAR, but it just gives us a slightly shorter test in 2026. Given that we have spent billions of dollars on testing over the past decade with virtually no gains in reading or math, it is time to admit that STAAR and the current testing and accountability system has failed the children of Texas.

HB4 also doubles down on punishing schools for performance coming out of the COVID pandemic. The 2022-23 test scores that were released last Thursday, with a 233% increase in F grades across the state, show that something is clearly wrong with the way that TEA is manipulating test results and that school districts were right in stopping their release. Because of the COVID learning loss that hit most heavily on low-income children and English Language Learners, as well as the way the TEA has moved goalposts after the game has been played, I believe that we should support and not punish schools suddenly facing severe sanctions. Let's restart the timeline with the 2024-25 school year and not use the questionable scores from the past two years to punish schools unfairly.

I'm also concerned that HB4 gives more and more power to the commissioner. It looks to me like the billions spent on testing over the past decade, as well as pushing schools and taking over districts, has resulted in little to no improvement in results across the state. Now is not the time to give this commissioner any more power.

You can't test and punish your way into great public schools. It is time to focus on supporting kids and teachers again.

Colleen Hopkins

Self, nurse

Fort worth, TX

I live in Keller ISD and feels that the school board should not have the authority to make the decision about whether we as a district split. This should be a community vote. This affects multiple factors and what happened in our community should never happen again which almost divided Keller ISD up. Please create a law to help protect our future generations and rights that a few dont try to go behind our districts back and try to make such major impulsive decisions

Luisa White
self, teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

HB 4 redesigns state assessments, reducing multiple-choice questions and streamlining test length. However, it fails to eliminate high-stakes testing pressures that push educators to “teach to the test” instead of fostering real learning.

The bill expands the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) authority to take over school districts, increasing the risk of state-appointed managers replacing elected school boards. This further erodes local control and gives the state more power to override educators and communities.

One of the most alarming provisions prohibits school districts from using state funds to challenge education policies in court. This prevents educators and parents from fighting back against harmful state mandates, stripping schools of their right to defend themselves.

HB 4 tweaks the accountability system, incorporating workforce readiness and industry-based certifications. While career prep is important, this does nothing to address chronic underfunding, teacher shortages, or classroom resources—the real issues impacting school performance.

While HB 4 makes some modest improvements to testing, it tightens state control over public schools, weakens local advocacy, and expands TEA’s authority to punish struggling schools instead of supporting them.

Our legislative priorities for assessment and accountability should be as follows:

- Expand the scope of Texas’ A-F accountability ratings system to include factors beyond STAAR test scores.
- Limit STAAR test scores to 50% of any domain or the overall score for districts and schools in the state’s accountability ratings system.
- Remove all high-stakes testing consequences for high school students.
- Design and implement a formative assessment that helps inform instruction throughout the school year without adding additional testing time and pressure.

Michael Belsick
Fredericksburg Tea Party
Fredericksburg, TX

FOR HB 4

Rebecca Bertoni
self (retired teacher)
Argyle, TX

Ideally the Texas legislature would work to bolster the public education system in the state. HB 4 however appears to be punitive to public schools.

1. The public schools felt they needed to sue to prevent STAAR test results because of the test revamp without sufficient time for the schools to prepare the students for the test. That's just not fair. Also the STAAR test was revised to have machine grading of writing samples which I as a retired English teacher know is not an acceptable way to grade writing.

I am against any prohibition of school boards from suing for sound educational reasons, for the welfare of their students.

2. The revamped state test to grade schools should not be administered until schools have sufficient time to prepare for it.

3. What I recommend is to use a national test, for public schools and for any private schools that receive voucher money, so that we can compare all of our state-funded Texas students to students in the nation. That saves the time and effort to make a Texas test. If we are trying to test reading and math skills we don't need to reinvent the wheel. There are tests that do that already.

I see there's a concern for career ready testing and I imagine there's something like that also, although that veers away from the goal of basic education, math, reading, and writing.

4. School boards and teachers should have input on whatever test is used by Texas for grading Texas students. That only makes sense. The state legislature and teachers and school boards all share the common goal of seeing successful Texas students.

Macy Satterwhite, Dr.
Lubbock-Cooper ISD
Lubbock, TX

At Lubbock-Cooper ISD, our mission is to prepare students for a dynamic future filled with emerging opportunities and yet-to-be-invented careers. Rather than focusing narrowly on standardized test preparation, we prioritize fostering adaptable, creative, and critical thinkers — an approach strongly supported by our community and local employers. They recognize the need for graduates who can solve problems, collaborate, and innovate beyond traditional academic measures.

While we believe in accountability, we advocate for an assessment system that captures the full spectrum of a child's growth rather than reducing their potential to a single test score. Our responsibility is to equip students not merely for their next exam, but for life. As educators, we support high expectations and accountability; however, we believe that measures must be meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and reflective of the full breadth of student learning.

A single high-stakes STAAR test administered once or even several times a year cannot encapsulate a student's capabilities. We need assessment tools that support instruction, encourage growth, and respect the learner. Across Texas, many districts already use a combination of STAAR and other assessments to better understand and support student needs.

Each indicator of student success tells part of a broader story. No single measure should define it. STAAR can remain a component of state accountability but should not serve as the sole measure. Just as a doctor would never base a diagnosis solely on a patient's temperature, we must not base a student's success solely on one score.

If designing an accountability system within the current A-F framework, I would include seven key components: student learning and progress, student safety and well-being, professional learning and quality staff, engaged and well-rounded students, future readiness, fiscal and operational systems, and community engagement. Each area would be informed by multiple data points, from attendance and fine arts enrollment, to survey results and student participation in CTE and advanced coursework, many of which districts already track.

We are not asking to eliminate accountability — we are asking for it to be more comprehensive, authentic, and reflective of what truly matters to students, families, educators, and communities. We stand ready to help Texas lead the nation in building a system that values multiple indicators and honors the whole child.

Respectfully,
Macy Satterwhite, Ph.D.

Laurie Duke
SELF, parent
Fort Worth, TX

HB 4 consolidates virtually all decision making regarding accountability and assessment into the hands of the TEA commissioner or the commissioner's advisory committee. It places unelected governance of our public schools on a commissioner and an advisory committee that are appointed. It gives broad reach to modify standards, assign ratings, not rate school districts and removes school district's ability to challenge the decisions. HB 4 then gives the commissioner the power to assign a board of managers and remove our elected school board members. All of this with the backdrop of vouchers and our elected state representatives being bullied into supporting vouchers, by the very person who appoints the TEA commissioner. As a parent, I am 110% against HB 4. It completely removes parental voice in what we want from our child's school. It also assumes that a derived state test is the primary means by which I judge my child's school. I can guarantee you it is NOT the case for me and for many other parents. I ask that HB 4 be a no from each of you on the Public Education Committee. Our kids need more mental health supports in school, more certified teachers, more counselors, more interventionists and more funding to give wraparound services.

Amanda Erickson
self
Austin, TX

Vote No as this bill makes no sense. First off, the STARR test does nothing for our schools or students in any way that measures the true learning of the students, and instead is used as a stick against our schools. That being said, this bill gives authority to a non-elected committee to set standards for our testing which is wrong. The authority should be with the elected State Board of Education, full stop. Additionally it forces school districts to fight ratings that are deemed wrong and puts the onus on districts to pay for the legal challenge, which do not have funding since y'all passed the voucher bill. Is this just another ploy to destroy our public schools? I think so. God help you for wrecking our public school system.

Brian Bloss, Mr.

Self, Educator

Grapevine, TX

Against HB4

To the esteemed committee on Public Education, my name is Brian Bloss. I have been in the teaching profession for 11 years. I strongly am opposed to the current language of HB4 and ask that it fail in its present structure. I find it troubling that this hearing is happening on the day that a majority of districts are engaged in STAAR so there is no recourse for us but to submit online testimony which hopefully will be read.

First, I am opposed to any measure that strips authority from the State Board of Education (our duly elected officials that have to prove to the electorate they are in support of public education) and would give more authority to an unelected commissioner of Education that over the last decade has proven to be just a filler position for friends of the governor. This stripping of power from the SBOE means that assessments become politicized and the key question one must ask is how is this in the interest of any child in the state of Texas?

Second, I am concerned about unintended consequences of shrinking the STAAR test from what it currently is. If we shrink it even more that raises the stakes for the student statistically as each missed question becomes worth more. It also means that fewer TEKS are assessed which makes the case for arguing student mastery more difficult.

Third, while I appreciate the idea of bringing in classroom teachers to score non-multiple choice questions, my concern is that you are adding additional burdens on teachers at the end of the year. If you have never been in a classroom, the time period after exams is fraught with extra concerns including maintaining student discipline and finding subs becomes increasingly difficult.

Finally, the mandate that Texas end up in the top 5 states of the NAEP MAP test is a ridiculous standard and one that will further add stress to our already overworked teachers. Any educator will tell you we can't predict what is on an adaptive test that increases in difficulty with how the student performs. The original language contained in statute about being a national leader is fine but mandating the top 5 really begs the question of what is this for considering that not everything tested on MAPS is necessarily TEKS aligned (a problem that definitely exists with the STAAR as well by the way).

Again, there are some interesting ideas here, but very few of them seem to have been run by people in education. If you want to change assessment and accountability then perhaps remove the high stakes provisions that exist on STAAR currently and instead focus truly on the GROWTH of a student rather than throwing out goals that sound real good for political talking points but are not truly achievable and will increase the burdens and anxiety of testing further on our most important stakeholders, the students taking the test and the teachers trying to prepare them.

God Bless your work but please do not pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Brian Bloss

Public Educator

Greg Brooks

Self/ parent/ grandparent

AUSTIN, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 4 (HB 4) currently before the Texas Legislature. HB 4, which relates to public school accountability and actions, raises serious concerns that could negatively impact our community and the education of our children.

Why I Oppose HB 4:

Unclear and Broad Language:

The bill's language is overly broad and vague, potentially leading to arbitrary interpretations and inconsistent enforcement. This ambiguity can create an environment of fear and stifle innovation in our public schools.

Potential for Excessive Restraint:

HB 4 could severely limit the ability of school boards and educators to make decisions based on the unique needs of their students and communities. This can lead to a one-size-fits-all approach that doesn't adequately address the diverse learning styles and backgrounds of our children.

Undermining Public Trust:

The bill's focus on accountability could be misinterpreted as a lack of trust in the public education system. This sends a negative message to teachers and administrators and undermines the valuable work they do in our schools.

Unintended Consequences:

HB 4 could have unforeseen consequences that harm our community. For example, it may lead to a decline in student achievement and a loss of talented teachers.

My Call to Action:

I urge you to vote against House Bill 4. We need legislation that supports our public schools and empowers our educators to create a positive learning environment for all students.

I am confident that working together, we can create a better future for our children's education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Greg Brooks

April Ollila
self -- public school educator
WHITESBORO, TX

“There is no failure. Only feedback.” ~Robert Allen

Assessment and accountability in education should be a guide to empower, build, and grow students and educators. My name is April Ollila. I currently teach 5th grade science and social studies. We are at the tail end of our assessment. STAAR has wrapped up for my campus and we will be doing end of the year NWEA MAP in the next week. As educators in my district and others, once the STAAR was done, we have moved on. Receiving data at the end of summer after this group of students has passed to middle school carries very little influence on my instruction. The map data that I will receive as soon as students submit and that I can conference one-on-one will help me guide those students in preparation for middle school science.

You will find that public educators are not opposed to assessment and accountability; however when you are using a one-day test that is above grade level and takes the students 6 hours to complete (yes, it took our 3rd, 4th and 5th graders 6 hours 2 weeks ago to complete the reading test); that is not a measurement of how our students are growing. Might be a measure of endurance, but not their growth.

On Monday, March 24, I had the joy and pleasure to sit with our TeachPlus Assessment and Accountability working group in Chairman Buckley's office and present our feelings towards testing. Teachers look forward to feedback and utilizing the feedback to guide our instruction. An assessment that is more comparable to NWEA Map that many districts already use is ideal. It's given 3 times a year (beginning, middle, and end), geared for RIT band, and takes on average 1-2 hours for students to take. There is not an entire interruption of the day, there is no need for testing coordinators to prepare for days on end, there is very little stress. But, the best part is: immediate feedback and data and conferencing with students which also allows for small group/intervention adjustments to be made immediately, classes can carry on which means we are not down instructional days, and best of all....students know their goals and they can adjust. A test like this could also gauge students in all academic areas, not just reading and math until 5th grade. As we pointed out with chairman Buckley, the time frame that STAAR is given, also means that we are pushing a full year of standards to before spring break. Instead of getting a full 36 weeks of instruction for all the TEKS, we are pushing our TEKS into 25 weeks (a few weeks to review).

Our TeachPlus team would love to testify in person if needed or even via zoom. We have done thorough research with other states and countries. We also represent various places around the state: Houston, Corpus, El Paso, Dallas, and rural Whitesboro and also encompass grades 3 through high school.

Raymond Najera
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support this HB relating to dangerous dogs. Due to extraordinary amount of dog attacks that have impacted the Bexar county region.

I have been personally affected by a vicious dog attack. My father Ramon Najera and wife Janie Najera were viciously attacked by two pit bulls. On 23 Feb 2023 My father did not survive the attack. There have been many more horrific dog attacks in Bexar county resulting in two other deaths and serious bodily injuries/amputations. Our community is needs important changes to the existing law. I highly encourage the committee to move this bill forward.

Jenny Moeckel
Self
Rockport, TX

Abolish the STAAR test

Lana Chappell

Self

Keller, TX

I have taught school for 30 years in two different states and 3 grade levels. I can not believe we are even discussing students acting non human in school. Ridiculous! The other students and teachers should not have to put up with that behavior and allowing it at all does nothing but encourage that desperate cry for attention.

Shanna Peeples

Self/professor

Amarillo, TX

I am writing to OPPOSE HB 4. My name is Dr. Shanna Peeples and I am a longtime Texas educator with over 15 years of experience in our public schools, teaching students at both the middle and high school levels. I am also a proud product of Texas public schools myself. I was proud to serve as the 2015 Texas Teacher of the Year and the U.S. National Teacher of the Year. I am deeply concerned that HB 4 would significantly expand the role of standardized testing and punitive accountability measures at the expense of student learning, teacher autonomy, and local community decision-making. While the bill mentions reducing the "burden" of testing, it simultaneously entrenches high-stakes testing as the foundation for rating schools, students, and teachers. Based on my experience, I know firsthand that an overemphasis on standardized assessments narrows the curriculum, stresses students unnecessarily, and limits the creativity and responsiveness that good teaching requires.

In particular, I am alarmed by sections of the bill that would:

- Tie high school and district ratings even more tightly to narrowly defined metrics like STAAR scores and certification lists, instead of broader, more meaningful measures of student success such as civic engagement, critical thinking, or problem-solving abilities.
- Make it harder for schools to challenge unfair accountability measures by limiting their ability to appeal decisions or seek judicial review.
- Expand the Commissioner's authority in ways that could result in removing local control from communities without adequate checks and balances.

As someone who has dedicated my career to helping students grow into thoughtful, capable adults, I believe HB 4 moves us further away from the kinds of schools our students deserve: schools that nurture all forms of learning, not just test performance. I urge the committee to consider how much has already been lost in classrooms due to over-testing and rigid accountability: the love of reading, the spark of curiosity, the development of student voices. Texas students are more than a test score. I ask that you vote against HB 4 and instead work with educators, parents, and communities to build a more human-centered, locally responsive accountability system.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Texas.

Amy Janssen

Self

ROCKPORT, TX

HB 4 The STAAR test should be eliminated because it fails to accurately measure a child's true knowledge and academic progress. The reading passages often test well above grade level, making it an unfair assessment for many students. Additionally, the focus on STAAR preparation promotes rote memorization rather than meaningful learning. The administration of the test wastes valuable instructional days that could be better spent on genuine education. Moreover, the STAAR test is extraordinarily expensive, and the millions of dollars spent on it each year could be far better allocated toward educational tools and resources that truly support student growth and success.

Linda Lichtman

self

The Woodlands, TX

HB 54 please vote no

Duke Barrier, Teacher/Coach

“Sel”

Houston, TX

Allowing TEA to be judge, jury, and executioner of state testing is setting public schools up for failure, subjectively, based off one man’s opinions. Give the power to people who are actually in the trenches doing the work. I don’t think any of us would want our last Uber driver flying our next plane. Why would be ok with someone with no experience in education dictating public education?

Allyson Hall

self

Livingston, TX

I am writing to express my deep concern and strong opposition to the expansion of school choice policies, especially the diversion of public funds to support private education. These policies may appear to offer families more "options," but in reality, they threaten to devastate rural communities, low-income families, and the very foundation of our public education system.

School choice initiatives siphon critical funding away from our public schools—funding that is already stretched thin. Rural districts, which often have only one or two schools serving large geographic areas, are particularly vulnerable. If student enrollment declines due to voucher programs or charter school expansion, many of these districts will face financial collapse. Entire schools may be forced to shut down, leaving students with limited or no access to local education.

Families in rural and low-income areas will bear the heaviest burden. They don’t have the same access to transportation or private school networks that more affluent families might enjoy. Longer commute times, fewer extracurricular activities, and disappearing athletic programs will become the norm. With reduced funding, these students will lose out on essential services, scholarship opportunities, and future success.

Why are we diverting public funds meant for public schools to fuel private education systems that are not held to the same standards, do not serve all students equitably, and are not accountable to the taxpayers who fund them?

Public education is a public good. Undermining it with policies that benefit the few at the expense of the many is unacceptable. I urge you to reject any legislation that promotes school choice at the expense of our public schools. Protect our communities. Protect our students. Invest in the future of public education—not private interests.

James Montgomery

Self

Sunset, TX

The TEA and the state elected official are stacking the deck on these A-F ratings. Since school districts are forced to offer education to all students, much of which is unfunded for special needs and special education, then forced to include those levels of academic achievement in the overall score the net result is artificially lowers scores. Why are the TEA and elected officials intentionally gutting public school systems? The recent \$8B funding level continues to put a bandaid on the overall issue which further shows the lack of real commitment to get our Texas public schools back to educating our kids. You are fooling yourselves if you think people will not remember what y’all have done to the education system. And No...I am not a flaming liberal, do not support so-called liberal teacher unions nor any other organization fighting against vouchers or pushing for proper school funding. The educators of Texas know the truth and no amount of dirty politics or woke mongering is going to change the facts and the truth. My biggest fear is this single issue provides democrats a platform to push because it impacts all Texans and it is simply wrong.

Carol McFall

self

PORT LAVACA, TX

If this Bill is to earn Pearson more money, then NO!! That is all these assessments do is make people at the top richer and students dumber! Go back to teaching basics and not 500 TEKS per grade level that are not even developmentally appropriate! STOP the online test!! Students being on computers all day is RUINING our children's brains!!! Figure out a way to measure the progress of a student without having them take day after day of testing. As I see it, the only reform is to the pockets of Pearson and the people that push for them to make more money off the backs of CHILDREN!!! LOOK at all the testing an EB student endures EACH year!!! Ridiculous!

Anthony Elmo

Retired

Fort Worth, TX

As a public school parent I detest STAAR testing and all forms of metrics-based approaches to learning. And for the teachers its an insulting and degrading experience for them as professionals. How dare you arbitrarily assign a school a grade? You should grade all of us parents too because we are just as responsible. HB4 is garbage. Hard no.