



## **Testimony of the Texas Latino Education Coalition Opposing CSHB 21 – Presented Before the Texas Senate Education Committee, May 11, 2017**

Chairman Taylor and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing the Texas Latino Education Coalition the opportunity to present testimony on HB 21. The Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) is a collaborative of organizations that advocates for the rights of Latino students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools. Our top priorities include strengthening public schools and providing fair funding of all public schools and all public schoolchildren.

In its previous version, TLEC considered HB 21 to be one of the more comprehensive and sensible approaches to advancing equity and adequacy in school finance filed this session. However, the addition of the targeted education savings account program is an inequitable element of the committee substitute and outweighs the otherwise good first steps that HB 21 makes toward bringing forward a sound, transparent and meaningful school finance system as envisioned by TLEC. TLEC opposes CSHB 21, as presented in this committee.

### **Equitable Measures**

- Gets rid of 1993 hold-harmless measures.
- Allows ASATR to expire (but “hardship” transition program must prioritize lowest wealth districts with less revenue first, rather than the current *pro rate* share).
- Rolls high school allotment into basic allotment, allowing more funds to flow through the formulas rather than outside.
- Adds \$1.5 billion to the system based on appropriations budget provisions.

### **Inequitable Measure**

- CSHB 21 incorporates an education savings account program for students with disabilities, which is harmful to public education finance for several reasons:
  - Special population voucher programs, such as this targeted ESA program, act as gateways to broader voucher and neo-voucher programs.
  - Research concludes that ESAs fail to deliver on the promise of better learning opportunities and student performance; siphon limited resources from local community schools; open up the

- potential for violating students' civil rights; hinder transparency and accountability; and tend to lead to more schools being racially segregated.
- Rolls transportation allotment into basic allotment, creating several harms:
    - Consolidation of transportation into basic allotment does not account for incredible differences between districts' transportation needs
    - Could result in schools charging students for transportation to school
    - Rolling the transportation allotment into the basic allotment takes away accountability that this money is spent on necessary transportation and redistributes it.
    - The limited transportation funds will now be split with wealthy districts that already get much more money than mid- and low-wealth districts, including money from the Available School Fund on top of other monies. Privately-operated charter schools also will now get a share of these funds. The decrease is estimated at \$50/ADA (\$125/ADA to \$73/ADA).
  - The newly-created financial hardship transition grant program would not serve the neediest districts first.

### **Adequacy Measures**

Aside from a (0.01) increase to the bilingual education allotment still remains grossly inadequate. While this would be the first move on the weight since 1984, the weights still remain inadequate.

### **TLEC Recommendations**

- Remove the targeted education savings account program.
- Do *not* consolidate the transportation allotment into the basic allotment. Keep it separate and increase it to reflect current costs and adequate funding.
- Increase weights for bilingual and compensatory education to at least 0.25.
- Decrease the allowable costs for bilingual and compensatory education allotments to 25 percent.
- Allow ASATR and other hold harmless measures to expire as currently intended.
- If the hardship transition program moves forward, allow the lowest wealth districts with the least capacity to raise revenue to get in line first.
- Any resulting increase in the basic allotment should be reflected in statute, not left to the whims of the appropriations committee.
- Expand the cost study of career and technology to include a research-based study of the weights and the Cost of Education Index.

### **Falling Well Short of Sufficient Opportunities for Underserved Students**

Strong, recent research shows that increased funding by the states has contributed to both improved student performance and lifetime outcomes, especially for underserved students (Jackson, 2016; Lafortune, 2016).

**The weights for compensatory education and bilingual education remain unchanged since 1984, but the standards and expectations for students and schools continue to evolve.** [IDRA's analysis](#) of STAAR student group performance rates, college readiness outputs, graduation rates and dropout rates reflect significant gaps between economically disadvantaged students and non- economically disadvantaged students and English learner and non-English learner students, in spite of successful individual economically disadvantaged and English learner students are experiencing in classroom across Texas. With such great and immediate need, there appears no reason the weights should not increase significantly for the next biennium while a cost study is being conducted to determine the more precise weights. This additional funding could help school districts provide a high quality education to all learners so long as the funding is carefully monitored. Some research-based examples of programs and services follow.

### **Research-Based Examples of Programs and Services**

<b>Bilingual Education</b>	<b>Compensatory Education</b>
Stipends for teachers and principals with bilingual and ESL certification	Stipends for teaching in schools with higher populations of economically disadvantaged students
Accelerated learning and high quality tutoring	Accelerated learning and high quality tutoring
Content-testing for new students first entering U.S. schools	Socio-economic school integration plans
Professional development for all teachers of EL students centered on language/content learning and cultural competency	Professional development for all teachers on cultural competency
Coaching and mentoring of teachers	Professional learning communities
Local monitoring programs to ensure bi-literacy and bilingualism	Block scheduling
Smaller class size	Smaller class size
Bilingual books, supportive materials and technology, and curriculum	Family engagement
High quality pre-K	High quality pre-K

In addition, the indirect costs allowed for the bilingual and compensatory education allotments are currently set at approximately 47 percent. To make the system more efficient, and to ensure that more revenue generated by those students actually reaches those students, IDRA recommends that the allowable indirect costs be decreased.

TLEC thanks this committee for the opportunity to testify and stands ready as a resource.

**Resources**

Jackson, C.K., & R. Johnson, C. Persico. (2016). “The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Academic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 157-218 (Oxford University Press).

Lafortune, J., & J. Rothstein, D. Whitmore Schanzenbach. (2016). *School Finance Reform and the Distribution of Student Achievement*, NBER Working Paper No. 22011 (National Bureau of Economic Research).

Robledo Montecel, M., & A. Cortez. (2008). “Costs of Bilingual Education,” *Encyclopedia on Bilingual Education*, Vol. 1, 180-183.