

July 17, 2017

Re: Letter from Numerous Education Groups and Organizations Regarding 2017 Special Session

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Straus and State Legislators:

The undersigned submit this letter to voice our position on the supplemental topics identified by Governor Greg Abbott for the special session related to public education and school funding. The undersigned is a diverse collective of education groups and organizations with hundreds of thousands of members located across Texas. Each is committed to building the common ground needed to enact positive school finance reform that ensures each and every child in every neighborhood public school has access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed both inside and outside of the classroom.

In response to Governor Abbott's proposed special session topics for the summer of 2017, the collective asserts their position as follows:

1. The State must meaningfully invest more *state* resources through school finance reform that ensures a high quality education for every child at every neighborhood public school; efforts to further shift the burden onto local property taxpayers must be avoided.
2. The State must not use taxpayer funds to subsidize private schools, and it must not withhold fair funding for public schools contingent upon the passage of private school funding.
3. The State must avoid taking action that would intrude upon local communities' taxing authority.
4. Texas' hard-working teachers deserve a pay raise, but any state-mandated teacher pay raise must be accompanied with additional *state* monies flowing through the formulas; districts should not be forced to reallocate existing, limited funds to pay for state-mandated pay raises.
5. Any school finance study must be research-based, sufficiently funded by an appropriation, and tied to specific short-term and long-term educational goals and outcomes.
6. The State must respect local decision-making and due process measures for hiring and firing teachers under current statutes; it must not force local school districts to adopt new termination policies that would further erode the teacher pipeline.
7. The State must not encroach upon public school employees' desire to join a professional organization/association and to have their dues deducted from their wages.
8. The State must not approve policies that could cause bullying and harm to Texas students by continuing to push forward the "bathroom bill;" Texas schools have managed this issue without incident and will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

Association of Texas Professional Educators
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Coalition for Education Funding
Elgin ISD
Fast Growth School Coalition
Intercultural Development Research Association
La Fe Policy Research & Education Center
MALDEF
Mexican American School Board Members Association
The McNeil Foundation
Pastors for Texas Children
San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
South Texas Association of Schools
Texas American Federation of Teachers
Texas Association of Community Schools
Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce
Texas Association of Midsize Schools
Texas Classroom Teachers Association
Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association
Texas HOPE
Texas Kids Can't Wait
Texas Latino Education Coalition
Texas LULAC
Texas NAACP
Texas State Teachers Association