



Keep Spending Guidelines for Bilingual & Comp Ed Funding

Testimony of IDRA presented for the Senate Public Education Committee on SB4's proposed elimination of spending guidelines – Morgan Craven, J.D., National Director of Policy, April 25, 2019

My name is Morgan Craven, I am the National Director of Policy for the Intercultural Development Research Association, IDRA. I am testifying on the bill.

I want to focus my testimony on the elimination of the spending guidelines for the compensatory education and bilingual education allotments. I disagree with this elimination, and I have recommendations for how to make the bill stronger.

Under current law, there are rules that guide districts on how to spend the direct and indirect portions of their comp ed and bilingual ed allotments.

When these guidelines were established, they were designed to ensure fiscal responsibility and to provide guidance to school districts in order to protect important funds for English learners and students at risk of dropping out of school.

Current statute includes the most basic directive for these funds – that the money be used for the kids in the allotments – as well as directives about the appropriate uses of the funds.

Yet, SB 4 removes these provisions.

If the purpose of this bill truly is to ensure equity and ensure that the funds go to the students who need them most, then we must have spending guidelines to make sure that districts are able to realize that purpose.

I'm sure the intent of all committee members is for the funds to be used for the designated groups of students. But the language in the bill must back up that intent. You cannot give money to districts and have taxpayers pay money to their districts, then simply hope that all of those districts, every single one, spends it in a way that best supports the students who need it.

I mentioned that I have recommendations, which I am happy to share with every member of the committee. There is language that was developed by a number of organizations, many in this room right now, some with very different constituencies. The language, which was added to HB 3 strikes a balance between district flexibility, fiscal responsibility, and protecting the English learners and students who are at an increased risk of dropping out of school.

I'll end by tying in a related concern we have with the bill. English learners are underfunded. A growing body of research, including IDRA's data analysis and research and a brief published just

this past Monday by the Texas Center for Education Policy at UT, show that only about 20% of English learners in the state will see any benefit from the new weight for dual language programs and that funding language programs (no matter how effective they are) rather than student needs can lead to inequity.

The spending guidelines protect the small amount of money that is invested in English learners.

For the comp ed allotment, there is the potential for an *increase* in funds. We should certainly have basic guidelines in place that the money that is allocated under the new comp ed system goes to the kids who need it most.

I have the pleasure of knowing and working with people who pushed for the spending guidelines that are currently in statute and who understand the importance of protecting the funds that are allocated for the kids who need them. I hope that you will do the same and I look forward to working with you and helping in any way I can.

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.