



State Takeovers of School Districts Do Not Work – We Must Elevate, Not Stifle, the Voices of Our Communities

TLEEC Public Comment against House Bill 3270, submitted by Ana Ramón to the Texas House Public Education Committee, March 30, 2021

Dear Chairman Dutton, Vice Chair Lozano, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of over 20 organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. We advocate at the local, state and national levels for high-quality teaching, curriculum and instructional practices and bilingual education for English learners, as well as fair funding and enhanced college access and success. TLEEC opposes House Bill 3270 because it trades elected school board power for the expansion of appointed commissioner authority. We believe in our local school communities and value their equal partnership in developing the students of Texas.

HB 3270 expands the authority of the commissioner of education to determine the fate and function of schools without reciprocal accountability measures for community members. Allowing any of an appointed commissioner’s decisions to be “final and unappealable” stands in stark contrast to principled systems of checks and balances. Restricting the ability of a local board of trustees to pursue legal actions or proceedings against the state or TEA undermines the ability of these boards to serve their student communities, and for communities to exercise local control over their own public schools.

Notwithstanding intent to “turnaround” schools identified as needing improvement, either academically or financially, studies show that state takeovers of school districts are ineffective strategies to improve schools’ academic performance or to establish stabilized district governance and staffing. However, it is well established that schools that center the needs of their local community at their core foster student attainment. We must elevate – not stifle – the voices of our communities and students to safeguard public education. Local communities should likewise feel empowered to elect their officials through the democratic process and ensure that they are held accountable. Power in the hands of the few is decidedly undemocratic. Local communities deserve to be able to take part in their own school district’s accountability system.

TLEEC makes the following recommendations:

- Protect and promote community input and engagement by opposing HB 3270.
- Adopt community-based turnaround efforts instead of state takeovers or private partnerships that support holistic, wraparound services to support schools that face multiple challenges.

TLEEC celebrates community accountability and the presence it affords to local stakeholders in school decision-making and processes. Public schools must remain accountable to the public, not a single official. Community input and engagement in school progress, improvement efforts, and the accountability system should be upheld as a cornerstone of public schools.

Resources

- Morel, D. (2018). *Takeover: Race, Education, and American Democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Zimmer, R., Henry, G.T., & Kho, A. (2017). The Effects of School Turnaround in Tennessee's Achievement School District and Innovation Zones, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(4), 670-696.
- Raise Your Hand Texas (November 17, 2016). Family and Community Engagement in Texas, webpage. <https://bit.ly/39q6P8O>

For questions, please contact TLEEC either through Ana Ramón (ana.ramon@idra.org) or Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes (chloe.sikes@idra.org) at IDRA, or Fátima Menéndez at MALDEF (fmenendez@maldef.org).

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. The coalition convenes organizations and individuals who advocate in the interest of public school students at the local, state and national levels.

TLEEC Member Organizations

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| ARISE Adelante | Texas American Federation of Teachers |
| American GI Forum, Miguel Hernandez Jr. Memorial Chapter | Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE) |
| Breakthrough Central Texas | Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) |
| Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) | Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC) |
| Easterseals Central Texas | Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin |
| Every Texan | Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE) |
| Houston Community Voices for Public Education | Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) |
| Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) | Texas NAACP |
| McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership | UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR) |
| Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) | |
| Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA) | |
| National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) – Tejas Foco | |