Maintain Full Education Funding and Equity in State Budget
TLEEC Public Comments to House Appropriations, Re: Public Education
Submitted to House Appropriations Committee, February 22, 2021

Dear Chairman Bonnen and Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of over 25 organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity.

We respectfully submit public comments regarding our recommendations for the Article III budget:

- **Maintain full funding for education and hold harmless provisions for 2020-21 attendance funding.** We encourage the committee to consider the full cost of education based on the past three-years’ attendance average for districts and projected enrollment growth, and not overly weigh the current drop in enrollment and attendance related to the pandemic. Underfunding schools based on current, temporary circumstances would leave schools without the financial resources they need to find and locate students, engage them across all instructional formats, and recover from the pandemic’s instructional disruption. Spring 2021 “hold harmless” provisions should be extended to ensure schools have the financial resources to finish the 2020-21 school year without reductions in force or other local budget compromises.

- **Invest in public K-12, higher education, and critical services that support students and families.** School communities require supplemental supports as they continue to face this pandemic. In addition to continuing academic instruction, schools provide meals, digital devices and connectivity across rural and urban communities, health services, and housing and legal aid information. These critical support services must be sustained in budget considerations through the state’s maintenance of effort by strategically directing federal stimulus funds to supplement, not supplant, public school funding.

- **Prioritize funding for historically marginalized students, such as emergent bilingual students (i.e. English learners), students receiving special education services, and students from limited incomes.** Following the 2011 legislative budget cuts, Title I elementary schools spent drastically less on young English learner students’ bilingual education programs, and on programs that benefit students from households with low incomes (Marder & Villanueva, 2017). Historically marginalized students have also experienced the most severe instructional disruption

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from the digital divide, and health and economic consequences of the pandemic. State budget considerations must maintain equity for historically marginalized students’ education.

- **Protect student financial aid.** Student financial aid programs like the TEXAS Grant, Texas Educational Opportunity Grant, and Tuition Equalization Grant make college affordable and accessible to tens of thousands of Texans. Funding for these programs must be maintained as a strategy for economic and educational recovery critical to the future prosperity of all Texans.

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

ARISE Adelante
Breakthrough Central Texas
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)
Dr. Hector P. García G.I. Forum
Easterseals Central Texas
Every Texan
Houston Community Voices for Public Education
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership
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
San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Texas American Federation of Teachers
Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC)
Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin
Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Texas NAACP
Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA)
The Education Trust in Texas
UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR)