



Public Schools Should Promote Racial Equity, Not Risk Re-Segregation

TLEEC Written Testimony Against House Bill 3129, submitted to the Texas House Public Education Committee, March 30, 2021

Dear Chairman Dutton, Vice Chair Lozano, and Honorable Members of the House Public Education 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 3129 because it will lead to segregation along racial and socio-economic divisions.

HB 3129 would impact both urban and rural schools throughout the state. The school choice system has largely replicated the inequalities of the system it was designed to replace (Wexler, 2018), and research across the United States highlights parallels between school choice policies, such as HB 3129, and resegregation (Gill, et al., 2007). The standing interlocal agreements offer the appropriate avenue for districts to negotiate inter-district transfer students' travel. There is also already a waiver process in place through TEA should districts be unable to negotiate an agreement.

A fairly recent legal case between Hearne ISD and Mumford ISD demonstrates the challenges faced by school districts when there is school choice involved. Mumford ISD advertises and solicits students from Hearne ISD through local media (Swaby, 2019). Across a 10-year period, Hearne ISD's white population dropped by 68% as Mumford ISD's rose. The recruited students must meet specific criteria for standardized test scores and not have any documented discipline or attendance problems. Essentially, Mumford ISD selectively recruits students based on their academic ability while disallowing other perceived challenges for students' achievement. Given racial and socioeconomic disparities in discipline rates, this practice furthers inter-district segregation.

As members of this committee are aware, school finance is a complex system, but it boils down to the fact that money follows the students. In districts that have declining enrollment due to "white flight" through inter-district transfers, the loss of attendance funds directly impacts a district's ability to sustain its educational programs.

Texas schools should offer all students a high-quality public education, irrespective of race or socioeconomic status. We urge the committee to vote against HB 3129.

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).

Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition

Resources

- Gill, B., Timpane, P., Ross, K., Brewer, D., & Booker, K. (July 17, 2007). What do we know about vouchers and charter schools? https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR11118-1.html
- Swaby, A. (November 4, 2019). This School District Has Been at Risk of State Takeover for Years. Some Blame White Flight, *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2019/11/04/texas-district-white-flight-state-takeover/>
- Wexler, N. (April 29, 2018). Six Reasons Why School Choice Won't Save Us, *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2018/04/29/six-reasons-why-school-choice-wont-save-us/?sh=1b5d611f142e>

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TLEEC Member Organizations

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| ARISE Adelante | Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE) |
| American GI Forum, Miguel Hernandez Jr. Memorial Chapter | Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) |
| Breakthrough Central Texas | Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC) |
| Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) | Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin |
| Easterseals Central Texas | Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE) |
| Every Texan | Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) |
| Houston Community Voices for Public Education | Texas NAACP |
| Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) | Texas State Teacher Association (TSTA) |
| 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 | |