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Texas Education CAFE™ Advocacy Network

Texas Policy Weekly Update

Each week, we are sharing the latest news about what's happening in Texas education policy and how you can make your voice heard.

Make sure you keep receiving these notices by subscribing to the Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network!



Coming Up: Week of March 22

Hearings this week will address:

- Better information on students receiving special education during the pandemic;
- Individual graduation committees for students affected by the pandemic; and
- Student mental and behavioral health resources.

You can watch the hearings live online. Each hearing covers multiple bills (click the links below to see the agendas). For hearings in the Texas House, you can submit comments about any of the bills being discussed during the hearing using an online portal (even if they've moved on to a different bill).



Tuesday



Wednesday

Public Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Thursday
Higher Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

[Watch hearings live](#)

[Watch past hearings](#)

Senate Higher Education Committee
9:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Thursday
Senate Education Committee
([See notice when it's available](#))

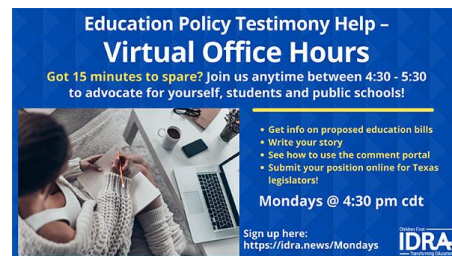
[Watch hearings live](#)

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Submit Your Comments this Week

IDRA holds virtual office hours to walk you through the process of submitting public comments online

Every Monday afternoon, IDRA helps students, families, educators and community members submit their own comments on education bills being debated by Texas lawmakers that week. #ShareYourStory



What happens during IDRA's virtual office hours?

- Get information on bills that will be heard by lawmakers that week.
- Summarize your own story and how a proposed bill would impact schools in your community.
- See how to use Texas' online public comment portal so you can share your thoughts and ideas with lawmakers. Submit your comments!

Mondays • 4:30-5:30 pm cdt

Bilingual event in English & Spanish

Register once to get the link and come back any time.

Register Now!

Note: IDRA will assist with bill information and the comment process, not on influencing a participant's position.

Highlights from Last Week

Students submitted their own testimony supporting broadband proposals. Here are excerpts:



“With slow internet, we become anxious and stressed because the pages won’t load fast enough. We have the constant thought that the Internet might crash at any moment and we won’t be able to access the exam anymore. This is a constant fear of mine because

most of my professors only allow us to access the exam once. If we exit the page without finishing, we can't access the page again."

– *Andrea Guzman, college student*



"Multiple times when [my daughter] is in class, the connection goes off or the Internet slows down and causes the computer to disconnect and take her out of her class. The internet fails a lot because, where we live, we don't have very good internet companies. There have been times when I have to speak to the school so that they do not mark her absent and I have to explain to them that the Internet at home is not very good."

– *Alma Muñiz, parent of high school senior*



"For the past few months, I've had to drive to my aunt's house to take my online classes since no Internet company could enter our neighborhood, making it difficult for me to even do assignments and homework every other day that I'm not able to drive to access the Internet... My younger siblings struggle with being connected through the whole class period. Homework is a major problem for them since they can't download or access the online areas."

– *Bill Ramiro, college student*

IDRA submitted the following testimony this week.

- [**Digital Health and Wellness Are Essential to a Digital Citizenship Curriculum**](#) – IDRA comments for House Bill 129 presented to the Texas House Public Education Committee, March 16, 2021
- [**Texas Must Increase the Presence of School Counselors in Public Schools**](#) – IDRA testimony for Senate Bill 178, presented to Senate Committee on Education, March 18, 2021
- [**School Counselors Must Gain an Increased Capacity to Serve Students Directly**](#) – IDRA testimony for Senate Bill 179, presented to Senate Committee on Education, March 18, 2021
- [**Individual Graduation Committees Should be a Permanent Option for High School Students**](#) – IDRA comments for House Bill 1603 submitted to House Public Education Committee, March 16, 2021
- [**Joint Letter to House Public Education Committee opposing House Bill 759**](#), March 16, 2021

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) submitted the following testimony this week.

- [**Public Schools Should Promote Racial Equity, Not Risk Re-Segregation**](#) – TLEEC Written Testimony Against Senate Bill 204: Relating to Public School Transportation Outside of Home Districts, Submitted to the Senate Education Committee, March 18, 2021

Tools & Resources

[Texas House Public Comment Portal](#)

[How to testify in the #txlege Twitter thread](#) by the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC)

[How to Testify before the Texas Legislature](#), Infographic

[Learn more about IDRA's policy recommendations for Texas](#)

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The infographic features two photographs at the top: a young boy in a graduation cap and gown, and a young girl with curly hair holding a book. Below the photos, the title "IDRA Education Policy Priorities for Texas" is displayed in white text on a dark blue background. A list of seven priorities follows, each preceded by a red star icon. At the bottom, the URL "https://idra.news/TxEDPolicy1" and the IDRA logo are shown.

IDRA Education Policy Priorities for Texas

- ★ Fair Funding for Strong Public School Education
- ★ End Harmful Discipline to Create Safer Schools
- ★ Grow & Sustain School District Health
- ★ Excellent Education for Emergent Bilingual Students
- ★ College Preparation & Access that Expands Opportunities
- ★ A Comprehensive Equity Approach to Addressing COVID-19's Impact on Schools
- ★ Keep the Public in Public Education

<https://idra.news/TxEDPolicy1>

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