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Texas Education Policy Alert

Weekly Update

IDRA's weekly email alert includes legislative updates, opportunities for action to make your voice heard, bills to watch and other information through the session until it closes in late May.

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Coming Up: Week of March 27, 2023

Hearings this week will address:

- Changes to funding for mental health and school safety issues
- Increases to school safety hardening measures
- Review of Senate budget recommendations
- Prohibitions on PRIDE Weeks and family discussions in schools
- Ending expiration of district virtual learning program options

**Monday**

Higher Education Committee
10:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Monday

Youth Health & Safety Select Committee
2:30 p.m. ([See notice](#))

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

State Affairs
10:30 a.m. ([See notice](#))

[Watch hearings live](#)

[Watch past hearings](#)

**Monday**

Finance Committee
10:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Wednesday

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

Monday

Subcommittee on Higher Education
([Notice pending, check here for updates](#))

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Highlights from Last Week

Senate Education Committee Holds Hearing on Voucher Proposals

The Senate Education Committee heard testimony on four private school voucher proposals late into the night last Wednesday, March 22. The bills range in financial impact. For just the first year of operation (2024), these bills would cost between \$1.1 million to over \$4.6 million of state education funds, with increasing costs each subsequent year. SB 8 also contains discriminatory language against LGBTQ+ students and topics in schools through grades PreK-12.

Many proponents of the bills expressed interest in public funds for private religious and home school education. Opponents shared concerns about the immense fiscal impact and the lack of regulation on financial or academic accountability to the public from the program. Others shared research on the discriminatory impact of vouchers against Black and Latino students, students with disabilities, emergent bilingual students, and LGBTQ+ identified students. Some opponents additionally relayed frustration about sending public tax money toward religious schools, and about state funding and potential reporting requirements for otherwise private settings and homeschools. The bills were left pending in the committee for further consideration.

- [Education Savings Accounts Are Inefficient, Ineffective and Unaccountable to Texas Students](#) – IDRA Testimony against SB 8, submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas Senate Education Committee, March 22, 2023
- [SB 8 Poses a Threat to Students' Civil Rights with Devastating, Discriminatory Impacts on Vulnerable Students](#) – TLEEC Testimony Against SB 8, submitted by Diana Long to the Texas Senate Education Committee, March 22, 2023

- [Parents Are Disempowered by Private School Voucher Programs](#) – IDRA Testimony against SB 176, submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas Senate Education Committee, March 22, 2023

See IDRA's infographic – [5 Reasons Private School Vouchers Would Hurt Students](#)

Video Highlights of Testimony Presented Last Week



Education Savings Accounts Are Inefficient, Ineffective and Unaccountable to Texas Students

IDRA Testimony against vouchers by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas Senate Education Committee

[Video](#)
[Written Testimony \(SB8\)](#)



Texas' CROWN Act Gives Every Texan a Fair Chance to Succeed Without Identity-Based Hair Discrimination

IDRA Testimony for House Bill 567, submitted by Alisha Tuff to the Texas House Committee of State Affairs

[Video](#)
[Written Testimony](#)



Restricting Intellectual Freedom in Texas Higher Education Hurts Quality Research, Scholarship and Learning

TLEEC Testimony against SB 16, submitted by Maria Unida, M.A., to the Texas Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education

[Video](#)
[Written Testimony](#)

Additional Testimony Presented Last Week

[HB 8 Establishes a Pathway to Increase Disadvantaged Students' Dual Credit Enrolment and Expand their Access to Opportunities in Higher Education](#) – IDRA Testimony for House Bill 8, submitted by Steve Kemgang to the Texas House Higher Education Committee, March 20, 2023 – [See video](#)

[Disconnection, Punishment, and Isolation Hurt Children and Make Our Communities Less Safe](#) – IDRA Testimony Against House Bill 655, submitted by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., to the Texas House Select Committee on Youth Health and Safety, March 20, 2023

[HB 459 Restricts the Use of Harmful Restraints by Police in Schools](#) – IDRA Testimony for House Bill 459, submitted by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., to the Texas House Select Committee on Youth Health and Safety, March 20, 2023

[Incentives for Instructional Materials that Enforce Classroom Censorship Compromise Students' Education](#) – IDRA Testimony against HB 1605, submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D. to the Texas House Public Education Committee, March 21, 2023

[Banning Books Makes Schools Less Welcoming for Students to Learn](#) – IDRA Testimony Against House Bill 900, submitted by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., to the Texas House Public Education Committee, March 21, 2023

[Children Need Education and Support, Not Zero Tolerance Discipline](#) – IDRA Testimony against SB 9, submitted by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D. to the Texas Senate Education Committee, March 22, 2023

[SB 2539 Establishes a Pathway to Increase Disadvantaged Students' Dual Credit Enrolment and Expand their Access to Opportunities in Higher Education](#) – IDRA Testimony for Senate Bill 2539, submitted by Steve Kemgang to the Texas Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education, March 23, 2023

Tools & Resources

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

See our Infographic: [5 Data Snacks on IDRA's Policy Priorities](#)

Read the [Policy Agenda for the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition \(TLEEC\)](#)

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

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IDRA Policy Priorities
for the 2023 Texas Legislative Session

- 1. Secure fair school funding
- 2. Ensure excellent educational opportunities for emergent bilingual students
- 3. Promote culturally sustaining school climates that support all students
- 4. Create safer schools without harmful discipline practices
- 5. Prepare all students to access and succeed in college

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IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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