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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.

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Coming Up: Week of May 17

Hearings and activities this week will address:

- expanding of the use of individual graduation committees,
- supporting important guidelines for the use of digital devices in schools, and
- opposing HB 3979/SB 2202, which would limit speech and ideas and prohibit discussions of race and discrimination in classrooms.

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).

No hearings announced yet.

See committee listing for notices.

Watch hearings live
Watch past hearings

Schedule for House floor proceedings
Watch House floor proceedings

Tuesday, May 18
Senate Education Committee
9:00 a.m. (See notice)

Watch hearings live
Watch past hearings

Schedule for Senate floor proceedings
Watch Senate floor proceedings

Opportunities for Action

Texas Education Agency needs your input about spending federal education relief funds

The Texas Education Agency issued a notice for public comment related to how the state's portion of the federal relief funds should be spent. The American Rescue Plan Act (the third federal relief package) requires states to submit applications for a portion of the funds to be released. Those applications must include plans developed through stakeholder engagement.

TEA is inviting input for the approximately $1 billion the state agency will receive. School districts also will develop plans for the federal relief money they will receive. We urge all organizations, students, teachers, families and other advocates to submit comments to TEA about how funds should be spent to address the long-standing educational inequities in this state that were made worse by the pandemic. Comments must be submitted by May 21, 2021.

Let TEA know how Texas should spend federal relief funds

Senate hearing expected on House Bill 3979

House Bill 3979 would severely limit the civic development of students, as well as the ability of teachers and school leaders to guide student development in civic spheres. After the House added a number of amendments, the measure must be reconsidered by a Senate committee. Originally set for the Senate State Affairs hearing today, it likely will be rescheduled for a hearing this Thursday, May 20.

If HB 3979 were enacted, our students would be without the opportunity to either garner practical skills needed to engage in civic processes or learn requisite knowledge to make informed, equity-minded decisions.

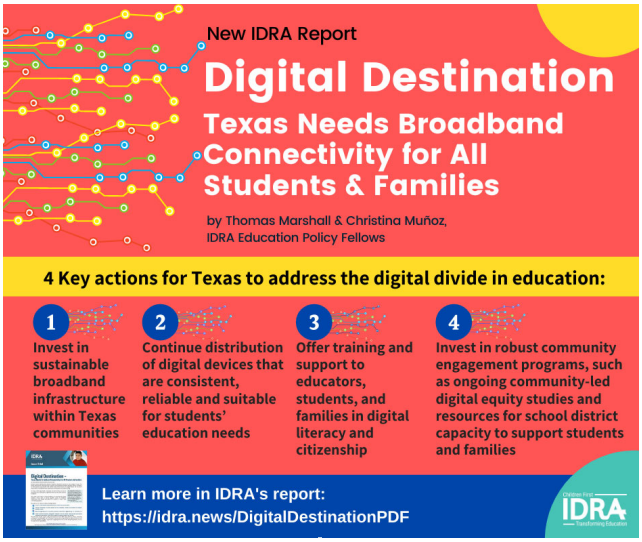
You can help! Contact members of the Senate State Affairs committee by phone, email or social media and urge them to vote AGAINST HB 3979!

IDRA released its analysis: **HB 3979 Conflicts with Established TEKS and Proven Effective Teaching Strategies**.

And the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition released a factsheet: **HB 3979 would limit speech and engagement in Texas classrooms!**

Statewide broadband measure pending conference committee action

House Bill 5 (by Rep. Trent Ashby, et al.) is the flagship broadband bill that would establish a state broadband office, institute a federal grant program for allocated broadband funds, and create a state mapping system to identify key areas of the state that lack access to broadband service. With both House and Senate conferees appointed, House Bill 5 awaits a scheduled date to appear in conference committee. The conference committee will work to resolve differences between each chambers' version of the bill.



IDRA supports measures to ensure education is centered in the final version, such as:

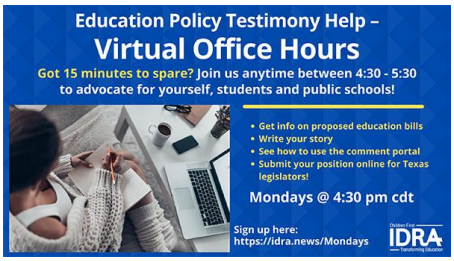
- Adding a seat on the Governor's Broadband Development Council for a representative from an urban school district,
- Increasing financial support and training resources for digital literacy programs, and
- Keeping specific language that assesses which school districts lack connectivity.

For more information, see IDRA's issue brief, **Digital Destination – Texas Needs Broadband Connectivity for All Students & Families.**

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 cst
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

"We have the power!" Women speak out for their children's education

ARISE Adelante and IDRA honored 19 women who completed a five-week virtual course on giving public testimony and comments to Texas state legislators. For the first time, these Mexican American women from the lower Rio Grande Valley made public comments to the Texas House of Representatives and Senate on education issues affecting their children and community.

Topics included: equitable school finance, school re-opening, technology and connectivity, mental health during COVID-19, access to four-year college education, and access to dual language programs.

During the celebration, Lourdes Flores, President of ARISE Adelante, said "This shows that we have the power. We, women from the community and mothers, can use our voice to emphasize issues of concern to our community."

The women are Education CAFE members. **IDRA's Education CAFEs** are based in a community organization rather than in a single school, and their sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community.

Video Advocacy Campaign

Digitally Divided, Community United

Students, Parents, Educators: How has the digital divide impacted you?

We need your voice! Record a 15-second testimony

Get details

Tools & Resources

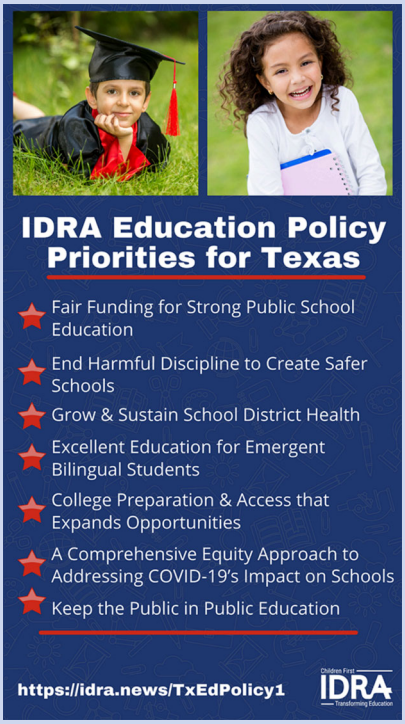
[Texas House Public Comment Portal]

[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]

Join the Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network!



Previous issues

- Week of March 22, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of March 29, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of April 5, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of April 12, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of April 19, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of April 26, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]
- Week of May 3, 2021: [(English)] • [(Español)]

- Week of May 10, 2021: (English) • (Español)

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Reach Out To Us