

April 10, 2023

Via E-Mail

House Committee on Public Education
The Honorable Brad Buckley, Chair
P.O. Box 2910, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, HB 4969

To Representative Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

As each of you on the House Public Education committee are charged with the jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to the public schools and the public school system of Texas and the financing thereof, we submit the following considerations for achieving the mission of public education in Texas as outlined in Education Code Section 4.001: "The mission of the public education system of this state is to ensure that all Texas children have access to a quality education that enables them to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation."

The Texas Legislature, in upholding the mission of public education, enacted legislation in the previous 87 legislative sessions to establish and protect a superior educational system for the children of Texas when compared to other states. At this time, these bills related to public taxpayer funds being used for educational savings accounts, alternative education providers, and/or tax credits are not subject to the robust education code and accountability that has been established for Texas public schools. It is this very education code passed by the Legislature that ensures oversight of curriculum (which does not allow for teaching of the Common Core), financial transparency standards, open meetings act, parental rights, complaint procedures, compliance with IDEA for children with disabilities, open records, and the list goes on.

If providing parents freedom from state regulations passed by the Texas Legislature in Texas Education Code (TEC) is the goal of this committee, then these same freedoms from the statutes should be extended to public schools equally. Unless the educational providers that receive tax-payer dollars are required to accept all students, then parents are not being provided additional rights because the school they may choose is not required to accept their child.

We urge this committee to look at research related to the impact of student mobility on student achievement. While some studies have found students can lose up to three months of reading and math learning each time they switch schools, other research indicated a student who changes schools often would equate to the loss of nearly a year of learning for that learner. Any policy enacted that increases the mobility of students between schools or schools and home can have detrimental effects in learning which will ultimately impact the workforce of Texas.

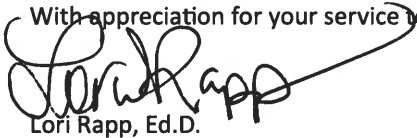
Any basis for asserting Texas public schools are failing is a flawed premise. Public education in Texas is under-funded, especially in light of inflationary costs. The basic allotment of \$6,160 per student is far below what private school tuition costs and is one of the lowest per pupil funding amounts across the country. Texas is currently \$4,000 behind the national average in per pupil spending and ranks 42nd out of 50 states. This committee has the possibility of taking historic steps to raise the Basic Allotment which would prioritize salary increases for teachers, address the student learning challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to ensure Texas public schools meet the needs of ALL students and their communities.

Additionally, there is not an equal comparison of educational performance across private and public schools in Texas, since only public schools in Texas are required to administer STAAR and be graded accordingly in an accountability system.

In LISD, we spend on average \$10,000 per student, and without an increase to the basic allotment, we are opposed to any LISD taxpayer funds diverted to alternative educational choices. Any system that is created to provide for public education should all be funded equally and with the same accountability for the use of taxpayer dollars.

We believe in parent choice and parental rights and have built a robust local educational system that prioritizes this and we stand ready in LISD to provide support in reviewing Texas Education Code and providing recommendations that would increase the control parents would have over curriculum, testing, accountability, grading school quality, and more.

With appreciation for your service to the great state of Texas,



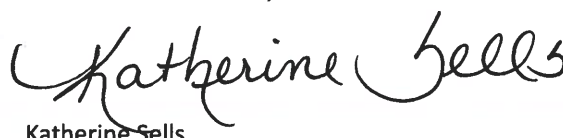
Lori Rapp, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



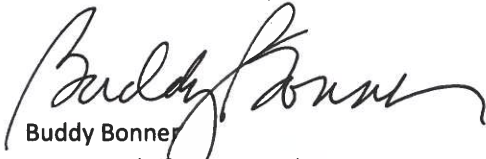
Tracy S. Miller
LISD Board of Trustees, President



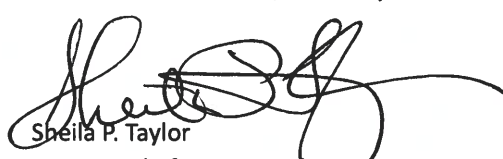
Allison Lassahn
LISD Board of Trustees, Vice President



Katherine Sells
LISD Board of Trustees, Secretary



Buddy Bonner
LISD Board of Trustees, Place 1



Sheila P. Taylor
LISD Board of Trustees, Place 3



Jenny Proznik
LISD Board of Trustees, Place 5



Kristi Hassett
LISD Board of Trustees, Place 6

CC: Senators representing LISD (Senator Parker, Senator Springer)
House Representatives representing LISD (Representative Bumgarner, Representative Capriglione, Representative Hayes, Representative Patterson, Representative Thimesch)
House Appropriations Committee Members, Article III
Senate Finance Committee Members, Article III