



TSTA NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TSTA says school closures necessary, urges districts to pay support staff

Texas State Teachers Association President Noel Candelaria issued the following statement:

We applaud the state's action in ordering the closure of schools, at least temporarily, as a safety measure against the spread of the coronavirus because the health of all our students, school employees and their local communities is a top priority of the Texas State Teachers Association. We also urge Gov. Abbott, the education commissioner and school districts to take steps to ensure that bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians and other support staff will be paid while the schools are closed. Unlike teachers and other professional staff, who are under contracts with their districts, these hourly workers have no guarantees that they will be paid.

Support employees are an essential part of our public school system and are on the front lines, protecting the safety, health and well-being of students. They are paid less than teachers and other professional staff, and they need their school income to provide for their own families and pay their bills like everyone else.

Support employees who are healthy and at low risk of contracting the virus could be assigned maintenance tasks, including the deep cleaning of school buildings. Other employees, including cafeteria workers and bus drivers, could help provide or deliver meals to low-income students, and we urge the state and districts to keep developing safe and effective ways of distributing meals without risking a further spread of the virus.

We also urge the Texas Education Agency and districts to prioritize equity as they find ways to provide online or distance learning for as many students as possible.