



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA demands the governor shut down schools for the year, take other steps to protect Texans' health

The Texas State Teachers Association today demanded that Gov. Greg Abbott order all of Texas' schools to remain closed for the remainder of the school year and take other steps to protect the health and safety of students, educators, their families and the communities they serve, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to worsen.

At least seven states, including Texas neighbors Oklahoma and New Mexico, already have closed their schools for the rest of this semester.

"Disease experts expect this pandemic to get worse, maybe much worse, in Texas before we see any relief, and the governor must take these steps now to protect millions of school children and the adults dedicated to serving and caring for them. A comprehensive, statewide school closure order is necessary because the outbreak is expanding across the state, and we don't know which counties it will strike next. Leaving this decision to individual districts creates unnecessary confusion and stress across Texas," TSTA President Noel Candelaria said.

"We also call on the governor to take steps assuring that all students, regardless of special needs, will continue to receive lessons and activities in a safe and secure manner during the closures and that all educators, including hourly school employees, will continue to be paid and receive health care benefits," Candelaria added. "Educators, as always, are dedicated to their students, even under extremely difficult and trying circumstances, but they must know that they will have the resources to meet their own families' needs during this emergency."

TSTA demands that the governor:

Require schools to continue distributing free meals in a safe way. Sixty percent of the children in Texas public schools are economically disadvantaged, and without these meals thousands of kids will go hungry.

Continue to fully fund school districts and require them to continue paying and providing benefits to hourly employees. Many of these support workers are risking their own health to clean school facilities, and others are helping feed children while their schools are closed.

Guarantee paid sick time for all school employees affected by COVID-19 and for employees required to care for ill family members.

Help school districts find ways to ensure educational equity for students with special needs, English language learners and economically disadvantaged children whose families can't afford computers or Internet access. They cannot be left behind in an emergency.

Waive all teacher appraisals for this academic year because of the extraordinary circumstances, including the inability to conduct direct classroom observations, created by the coronavirus emergency.