



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA: Extend virtual learning option statewide

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina released the following statement in response to the Texas Education Agency's online waiver changes for selected counties:

The state must stop tweaking waiver guidelines for selected counties during a dangerous health emergency and give every school district in Texas the authority to conduct only distance learning for the remainder of the fall semester without a funding penalty.

The entire state is still a COVID trouble spot. Confirmed cases of the virus are increasing among students and school employees who have returned to campuses throughout Texas. It also is clear that many districts are not sufficiently enforcing safety guidelines to protect students and school employees, based on a member survey TSTA is conducting.

So far, more than 700 TSTA members have reported more than 4,000 violations of COVID safety standards or recommended employee policies in more than 140 school districts throughout the state, risking the health of students, school employees and their families.

These problems include widespread violations of social distancing and ventilation in classrooms, violations of the governor's mask mandate and insufficient safety equipment and sanitation supplies. Many districts also have inadequate sick leave policies that discourage teachers who may be infected with the virus from staying home. Many districts also are refusing to give accommodations to high-risk teachers or school employees with high-risk family members.

Gov. Greg Abbott and Education Commissioner Mike Morath must crack down on these practices and extend the option for exclusive online learning to every school district until at least the winter break.