



# TSTA NEWS

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## **TSTA calls on Gov. Abbott to stop “bullying” and keep schools fully funded and safe**

The Texas State Teachers Association today called on Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Education Agency to quit forcing school districts, at the risk of losing funding, to keep buildings open during the COVID-19 pandemic. TSTA also urged the governor and TEA to keep districts fully funded, at last year’s levels, despite attendance losses over which the districts have no control during this health emergency.

A “hold harmless” period that has kept districts’ funding stable despite drops in attendance is expected to end after the fall semester.

“The deadly pandemic continues to hammer Texas and is resurging. But districts are still forcing teachers and other employees, many with serious underlying health conditions, to return to campuses for risky in-person instruction because if the districts don’t, they will lose state funding,” said TSTA President Ovidia Molina. “This is political bullying, and it must stop. The governor and TEA must quit holding the safety of our students, educators and families hostage.”

She added: “To make matters worse, a so-called ‘hold harmless’ period designed to keep districts’ funding stable, despite attendance losses, is expected to expire at the end of the fall semester. Districts have little, if any, control over attendance when students and their families are trying to stay safe during a frightening health crisis and trying to learn new methods of instruction.”

Molina said the governor and the Texas Education Agency “must guarantee school districts their full level of funding for the rest of this school year, at last year’s levels, regardless of attendance and regardless of how they choose to provide instruction. Districts should be allowed to offer only virtual learning for the remainder of the school year, without a financial penalty, if local school officials and health experts — the people who know their communities best — believe that is the best way to protect them.”

“School employees have responded heroically to this health crisis. At personal risk, they have protected students, kept them fed and reinvented teaching options, all at significant additional costs to districts. Our state’s economic recovery depends on our public school system, and all our school districts must receive reliable, stable funding for this entire school year,” Molina said.