



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA: House Bill 3 didn't solve the school funding and educator pay problem; more school funding is urgent

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina issued the following statement on Gov. Abbott's State of the State address:

If Gov. Abbott thinks that House Bill 3 solved the school finance and teacher pay problem in Texas, he is sadly mistaken. House Bill 3 was a good start, but the governor and the Legislature must do more. Despite the extra funding provided by the Legislature in 2019, the average teacher pay in Texas and the average spending per student still lag woefully behind the national average.

According to the latest survey by TSTA's affiliate, the National Education Association, the average teacher pay in Texas in the 2019-20 school year was \$57,091, more than \$6,500 below the national average of \$63,645. And Texas trailed the national average of \$14,254 in spending per pupil in average daily attendance (ADA) by an estimated \$2,839 per child, drawing on Texas' own budgetary data.

To keep Texas schools and teachers from falling even further behind, the governor and the Legislature must do more than maintain the spending levels of House Bill 3. They must increase that funding level because the needs of educators are greater than ever as a result of the pandemic. To help, lawmakers can tap into the \$11.6 billion Rainy Day Fund.

For starters, the state must keep all our districts fully funded, at least year's levels, for the remainder of the spring semester, regardless of attendance losses over which districts have little control during a health emergency.

Our teachers and other school employees have responded heroically to this crisis and are still waiting to be given the priority they deserve for a COVID vaccination. 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 our school system depends on our still underpaid teachers and support staff.

With the pandemic still raging, TSTA also urges the state to let school districts close in-person instruction, without losing state funding, if local health and school officials believe that is necessary to protect the health and safety of students, educators and their communities.