



HB 3270 – HOUSTON ISD TAKEOVER

Texas House Public Education Chairman Harold Dutton, Jr. filed a bill Tuesday that would clear the way for Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath to replace the democratically elected Houston ISD board trustees with a state-appointed board.

Although Commissioner Morath moved in November 2019 to oust board members because of the failure of one high school, the effort has been caught up in courts. Per Texas's Third Court of Appeals, HISD had not actually triggered a law requiring sanctions. Dutton's bill is an attempt to change the statutory language that led to the court's decision. The bill would also remove the right of school districts to litigate in response to school sanction decisions made by the Commissioner of Education.

HB 3270 would also expand the commissioner's authority to electively investigate districts and provides that third party reviewers of the investigation would be selected by the commissioner himself. The bill includes a section that would allow TEA to classify witnesses, which would mean that their identities would not be subject to public record.

Outside of HISD considerations, the bill would create a loophole by which the agency could assign a school district a rating of "Not Rated" for "data breaches or other failures in data integrity." This could result in an uneven playing field whereby some schools, such as charter schools, would be provided more time for turnaround efforts than others.

The bill would also undermine local authority over campus turnaround determinations by authorizing the commissioner to modify the turnaround plan even after having been approved.

TSTA disagrees with punitive policies that lay blame for systemic injustices at the feet of educators, and we disagree with any policy that removes voters' power to decide who governs their schools. HB 3270 would lay out the red carpet for the commissioner to hand select winners and losers in public education. For these reasons, TSTA does not support the takeover of Houston ISD or HB 3270.