



TEACHER DESIGNATION SYSTEM AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Texas State Teachers Association offers the following comments to the Texas Education Agency Division of System Innovation on Proposed New 19 TAC Chapter 150, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Educator Appraisal, Subchapter AA, Teacher Appraisal, §150.1012, Local Optional Teacher Designation System, and §150.1014, Teacher Designation Performance Standards.

The Texas State Teachers Association appreciates the work of the Texas Education Agency in drafting the proposed amendment concerning teacher appraisal and the requirements for a school district's local designation plan. We oppose the proposed changes to §150.1012(a)(2)(B) because we believe this would exacerbate the inaccessibility of TIA to our members and deepen the disparity of teacher pay that is unconnected to experience, advanced degrees or professional development. We also oppose proposed changes to §150.1014(b) and new (c) (1) (2) and (3) because we believe they are redundant and unnecessary.

TSTA has been consistent in our opposition to merit pay programs such as the Teacher Incentive Allotment, but, because Texas underfunds public schools and teachers earn \$7,500 below the national average, educators are left with little choice but to chase the carrot. Most of our members work in a district with an approved local designation plan or in a district that has begun the process of developing a local designation plan. Many have held active roles in stakeholder groups helping to shape designation plans and ensure they are as tied to authentic measures of quality as is possible within the guardrails of the system. Proposed §150.1012(a)(2)(B) devalues this work and would make the already limited access to higher salaries even less accessible to greater numbers of educators.

Proposed change to §150.1012(a)(2)(B) will negatively affect teacher access to better pay

Imposing a such a steep renewal fee as proposed in the amendment to §150.1012(a)(2)(B), and requiring this in addition to the per-teacher fee for renewal, would drastically reduce teachers' access to better compensation. For many districts, the cost of renewal may exceed the value of the allotment funds. Additionally, many currently designated teachers may likely face a salary decrease if their districts find plan renewal to be cost-prohibitive. An unexpected pay decrease would make it difficult for teachers to manage personal budgets, and it would be yet another slap in the face to the profession.

The proposed change would also exacerbate the problem inherent in incentive pay programs. Better pay for only a small few lucky enough to be employed in districts with approved designation plans or in positions that qualify for the program leaves too many behind. Teachers will either flock to districts with the capacity to maintain local designation plans or will leave the profession altogether.

Additionally, we believe the rules would continue to unfairly privilege charter districts given that a large number meet the definition of rural. Under the proposed amendment, 93 percent of charter schools would be able to renew designation plans for substantially less money than the vast majority of independent school districts. Charter schools are not required to admit all students and can arbitrarily cap enrollment to their benefit. In this

way, they would be able to continue to manipulate enrollment to gain more affordable access to designation plan renewal and to the allotment funds.

Proposed changes to §150.1014(b) and new (c)(1)(2) and (3) are redundant

Distinguishing in rule language between categories for teacher effectiveness data captured through the 2022-2023 school year and data captured beginning with the 2023-2024 school year is unnecessary when the categories for teacher effectiveness are identical.

Since the passage of HB 3, state leadership has represented to teachers that the Teacher Incentive Allotment is an accessible and impartial way for every Texas teacher to earn more money. Governor Greg Abbott has been promising six-figure salaries for years, and in a recent gubernatorial debate said the idea is “catching on around the state. If teachers will dedicate themselves to be these master teachers, they will be able to earn a six-figure salary.” In reality, just over 1 percent of Texas teachers are designated, and less than one-third of 1 percent earn a six-figure salary through the TIA.

TSTA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule language. We believe the proposed amendments would only serve to perpetuate the disingenuous promises of better pay made to teachers and push more educators out of the profession. As long as the state has an incentive pay program, TSTA will continue to advocate for metrics that evaluate teachers authentically and for rules that expand accessibility. But we believe that the best way to keep effective teachers in the classroom is through a state-funded across-the-board pay raise for every teacher and differentiated pay that recognizes advanced education and professional development.