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## TSTA SUPPORTS HOUSE BILL 1225

*The following are the Texas State Teachers Association's  
comments on House Bill 1225*

The Texas State Teachers Association appreciates the filing of House Bill 1225 because we wholeheartedly agree that any student should have a right to an assessment instrument in paper format. TSTA agrees that parents should be afforded the right to request a paper assessment, but we also believe that educators should be able to make this request as well. There are many students for whom an online format is not in their best interest and whose test scores would be negatively impacted due solely to the fact that the test is not on paper. Parents and educators alike should be trusted to know what is in the best interest of the student.

Under current law, requests for a special paper administration of STAAR can be made, but this option is only available to a limited number of students who receive special education services. It must be documented as a required accommodation in the student's individualized education plan, and requests will only be selectively approved. Moreover, requests made based on parent or student preference alone will not be granted.

TSTA testified in the interim and expressed support for some aspects of the HB 3906 STAAR redesign. TSTA also has a handful of concerns, including the expectation that under current law the majority of students are required to take the state's high-stakes summative assessment online.

Our primary concern with the current law is that all but a select few students must take the online summative assessment. TSTA believes that the variance in the typing abilities of students will not only inhibit student success, especially for the younger students and those with special needs, but that this will disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged students.

The technology applications of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), adopted in 2022, consist of five strands including practical technology concepts such as keyboarding. However, the TEKS alone do not guarantee a level of keyboarding aptitude necessary for an elementary student to be successful on an online administration of the STAAR.

The technology application in Kindergarten through fifth grade require educators to teach "ergonomically correct keyboarding techniques and developmentally appropriate hand and body positions" and to "build student knowledge of software applications and hardware focusing on keyboarding."

The sixth grade is the first mention of speed and accuracy when applying the techniques, and even then it is only expected that students demonstrate "improvement" not a standard that would ensure any perfunctory measure of skill necessary to compose. This continues to eighth grade, and there are no keyboarding TEKS in high school.

The new online format will improve the testing program for teachers and students in some ways, but TSTA also has concerns related to relying on a digital infrastructure and the potential and unnecessary disruptions this will cause

for student learning. There is a history of online testing systems crashing, and Texas students experienced this as recently as the 2020-21 school year. There are also growing incidents of cyberattacks on student data software, exposing private information that could result in long-term consequences.<sup>1</sup>

TSTA and other education stakeholders also have concerns about the general overexposure to technology and the fear that Texas is moving school too far onto digital platforms. Students should be engaged in active and enriching learning, and screen-based assessment will likely result in an increase in screen-based instruction.

It is not fair to assume that all students have sufficient keyboarding skills so as not to interfere with their demonstration of knowledge of the content area knowledge and skills. Overreliance on digital infrastructure and data security are also relevant concerns that parents and educators should have the freedom to distance themselves from. For these reasons, TSTA supports House Bill 1225, which would allow parents the right to opt out of online testing. We also would recommend that educators, in concert with parents, be allowed to weigh in on the testing modality that is best for the individual student.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/31/business/student-privacy-illuminate-hack.html>