



TSTA IS NEUTRAL ON HB 100, WITH CONCERNS

The following are the Texas State Teachers Association's testimony on House Bill 100

The Texas State Teachers Association appreciates the filing of legislation written to address educator compensation. We support that HB 100 increases teacher salaries, would amend school funding to being based on enrollment, and increases the basic allotment. **However, HB 100 does not do enough.** Texas is facing one of the greatest teacher shortages ever, and 70 percent of teachers are seriously considering leaving the profession.¹ With a budgetary surplus of \$32.7 billion, Texas has the money to fully fund comprehensive and meaningful responses to the challenges facing Texas public schools, including the educator staffing crisis, and it is incumbent upon the 88th Texas Legislature to act.

Teachers need an across-the-board pay increase of at least \$10,000

While it's true that the best teachers are drawn to the profession for reasons other than compensation, many Texas teachers can no longer afford not to quit. According to data from the 2021-22 school year, the average Texas teacher salary trails the national average, teachers are at a substantial competitive disadvantage relative to other comparably educated individuals, and Texas ranks 43rd in the nation for average top salary. Competitive teacher compensation is an important part of the solution to recruit and retain a strong and diverse workforce, but Texas teachers also see little benefit to an extended career in education.

CHALLENGE

- Texas is ranked 26th in average teacher salary, which trails the national average by \$7,510²
- When adjusted for inflation, Texas teachers are making 1.54% less than they were in 2012-13
- Texas is ranked 14th for average starting salary but ranked 43rd in top salaries for veteran educators
- Texas teachers are not rewarded for advanced degrees and training relative to other states
- Retired Texas teachers have not seen a cost-of-living adjustment since 2004
- Active educators and retirees cannot afford health care because the state has neglected to increase its monthly contribution to TRS Active Care premiums for school employees
- Texas teacher salary concerns are exacerbated for teachers with student debt, which disproportionately burdens educators of color

RECOMMENDATION

- Texas teachers should receive a pass-through, across-the-board minimum salary increase of \$10,000 above the amount each teacher would have received pursuant to local salary schedules and compensation systems. This is approximately the

¹ Texas State Teachers Association and Sam Houston State University Moonlighting and Morale Survey, 2022

² National Education Association Rankings of the States, 2021, and Estimates of School Statistics, 2022

amount by which the average Texas teacher salary would increase if teachers had received a proportionate share of state funding increases over the past two decades.

- Pay should be differentiated for teachers who pursue advanced degrees, advanced trainings, and teacher-leader rolls and duties. This includes a recommendation to amend the Teacher Incentive Allotment to provide that National Board certified teachers are automatically designated as exemplary.
- TSTA supports that HB 100 differentiates pay based on whether a teacher holds a certification or has completed an educator certification program. However, we believe every teacher's salary should increase annually. We also have concerns with the minimum salary schedule ceiling being set at 10 years.
- We do not support that provision of HB 100 that would permit a district to go below the minimum salary schedule in a year following an unsatisfactory performance review. The evaluation instrument is based largely on student standardized test scores, and for this reason there are many instances where a teacher's evaluation may fluctuate from year to year. An educator needs to have a minimum salary that can be relied on and budgeted for.

Enrollment-Based Funding

TSTA supports moving Texas to a system that funds schools based on enrollment instead of attendance. Attendance-based funding disadvantages districts with high concentrations of low-income students and students with chronic health issues. Using funding to incentivize attendance is based on the unfounded assumption that absenteeism is mostly voluntary, and the primary cause is truancy. While 46 states use a foundation school program similar to that used in Texas, **only seven states use attendance for funding (CA, ID, IL, KY, MS, MO, TX).**

School districts plan and budget based on the number of students enrolled. Every student must be assigned a campus, classrooms, teachers, and desk space. The school must be prepared to educate every child every school day, even when a child is absent for the day. Schools do not save money when children are absent. In fact, chronic absenteeism brings additional costs such as remediation for students and administrative time for teachers and districts.

Attendance taking has become an overburdensome administrative task for teachers and districts during the pandemic. Lack of conformity across districts on how and when attendance is taken, coupled with students struggling to connect at the right times, has led to unreliable attendance data.

In 2020 of the nearly 5.5 million students enrolled, 434,350 or 8% of students were not reflected in average daily attendance for funding purposes. Because low-income students and those with chronic health issues drive higher absenteeism, using attendance for funding penalizes schools based on the types of students they serve. Districts with rates of low-income and other hard teach populations are being denied the resources needed to overcome the obstacles their students arrive with—including the issues that lead to chronic absenteeism.

The Legislature should adopt enrollment-based funding to improve equity, increase stability, decrease administrative burdens, and fund every student in Texas public schools.

Basic Allotment Increase

TSTA supports an increase to the Basic Allotment, and we appreciate that HB 100 makes required pass-through teacher salary 50% instead of 30%, but \$50 is grossly insufficient. Just to keep up with inflation (14.5%) and maintain funding levels from 2019, Texas would need to increase the basic allotment \$1000 per student.