



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA: Legislature must invest more in public schools and teachers, say no to vouchers

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina released the following statement:

We applaud the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment for recommending pay raises for teachers and school personnel with a proposed increase to the basic allotment, but we are unhappy that the panel also suggested recommendations if a parental choice program is enacted by the Legislature.

We fear that higher educator pay and more resources for our public school classrooms will again be held hostage to vouchers, which the legislative leadership is trying to sell as parental choice. They can call it what they want, but it is still a voucher program which will waste billions of tax dollars for privatization efforts.

A voucher bill that was approved by the Senate but died in the House during the regular session would have cost \$1 billion a year in general revenue by 2028, money that should go to public schools, and the price tag would have continued to increase.

Meanwhile, public schools remain under-funded and teachers and support staff remain underpaid. Teachers need significant pay raises, not the limited salary bumps and one-time stipends that died during earlier sessions this year. School support staff, many of whom aren't even paid livable wages, need substantial pay increases as well.

The average teacher salary in Texas is more than \$7,700 below the national average. And, based on a TSTA survey of its members, about 40 percent of Texas teachers are forced to take second or third jobs during the school year to meet their families' needs. Many teachers are leaving the profession for higher-paying work.

But state leaders have so far ignored a task force appointed by the governor last year, which concluded that raising teacher compensation was critical to improving teacher retention.

The Legislature began work this year with a record \$33 billion budget surplus but already has spent more than half of it on tax relief. Lawmakers must invest more in public schools and educators and say no to private school vouchers.