



TSTA TESTIMONY ON TEACHER RETENTION

The following are the Texas State Teachers Association's comments delivered to the House Public Education Committee on June 1, 2026.

Even with the pay increases the Legislature enacted for most teachers last year, thousands of Texas teachers are still struggling to make ends meet for their families.

Every two years, faculty at Sam Houston State University conduct a teacher moonlighting and morale survey for the Texas State Teachers Association. This survey covers a number of issues affecting teachers' ability to do their jobs, and it most recently was conducted this spring.

This year, 497 teacher members of TSTA participated, and 33 percent -- one-third of them -- said that, despite the pay bump, they still had to take extra jobs during the school year to meet their budgetary needs. This was the same percentage -- 33 percent -- who reported moonlighting during the school year the last time this survey was taken in 2024 -- before the pay raises.

The 2025 pay increases, which covered most but not all teachers, were a step in the right direction, but they still fell short of what must be done to address Texas' shortfall of experienced teachers.

According to the National Education Association's annual rankings of education spending, the raises helped boost the average teacher salary in Texas for the just-concluded 2025-26 school year to \$68,000, but that is still more than \$8,500 below the national average and ranks Texas 29th among the states and the District of Columbia. Even with the raises, Texas teachers on average are earning 3.67 percent less than they were in 2017, after salaries are adjusted for inflation, the study calculated.

According to the same National Education Association report, Texas spent \$15,557 per ADA on public school funding in 2025-26, almost \$5,000 less per student than the national average, ranking Texas 40th.

Most teachers who take extra jobs during the school year fear that doing so can hurt their performance in the classroom, and 84 percent of this year's moonlighters said they would quit their extra jobs if their teacher pay was adequate. But for now, they aren't paid enough to take care of their families' needs.

Based on this spring's survey, most outside jobs taken by our teacher members required a time commitment of five to 15 hours a week, with some spending as many as 30 hours on extra work each week.

Most TSTA survey respondents said they have not benefited from the Teacher Incentive Allotment. Twenty-three percent said their districts have received grant funding from the TIA program, but only about one-fifth of those said they had received pay increases through the TIA funding.

Responses to another survey question indicated that many teachers spend between \$500 to \$1,000 out of their own pockets each year for classroom supplies, thus supplementing school district budgets.

"I can't afford much more," one teacher said, while another declared. "I refuse to buy supplies anymore."

TSTA applauded last year's pay raises, but they weren't enough. They didn't even cover inflationary increases over the past decade.

We urge lawmakers during next year's session to give Texas' public schools -- and public school educators -- the priority funding they need and deserve.