



Texas School Alliance Testimony SB 3 by Senator J. Nelson

February 25, 2019

The Texas School Alliance (TSA) comprises 37 of Texas' largest school districts, serving over 2 million students or nearly 40 percent of the state's total pupil enrollment. Our students represent 44 percent of the state's economically disadvantaged student population, 52 percent of its English Language Learners, and 45 percent of all at-risk students. The organization works on issues that will improve educational quality for Texas students, particularly those in large and urban districts.

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The Texas School Alliance is registering “on” SB 3.

TSA appreciates this opportunity to submit written testimony to the Senate Finance Committee and voice our appreciation and concerns regarding SB 3 by Chair Jane Nelson.

- TSA applauds the intent of SB 3 to raise teacher salaries. This is something that has been desperately needed for many years.
- TSA appreciates Sen. Nelson's desire to put more funding into Texas public schools and specifically into teacher compensation. TSA understands that significantly higher teacher salaries will help retain effective teachers and attract bright, creative teachers in the future who might otherwise choose careers outside of education.
- TSA is thankful for the provisions in the bill that allow a school district that makes recapture payments to the state to take a credit, in the amount of the state aid for the salary allotment, against the total amount the district is required to pay in recapture.

As much as TSA likes certain provisions of SB 3, TSA is testifying “on/neutral” because of some concerns about the practical effects of the bill. Specifically,

- SB 3 gives no discretion to school districts to use the allotment to address specific needs of a district. TSA believes if school districts were given discretion to use at least a portion of the allotment for other campus needs, SB 3 would be greatly improved.
- The salary increase will flow to full-time classroom teachers only. While we are supportive of the funds being channeled to teachers, we also acknowledge that counselors, librarians, nurses and other critical staff members will not see any compensation increase.
- The bill has the potential to create “winners and losers” on every campus and that has the potential to impact critical elements of a campus like morale and culture.
- SB 3 will also cost each district a significant amount in the payments districts have to make to the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) on the portion of a teacher's salary above the minimum salary schedule. TSA estimates that the increase in TRS payments will be close to \$140 million statewide.

Again, SB 3 is well-intentioned and addresses the much-needed area of teacher salaries. TSA, however, would like to see the bill amended to provide some discretion regarding the allotment contained in the bill. TSA welcomes the opportunity to work with Chair Nelson and the Senate Finance Committee as the bill works its way through the legislative process.

For further information, please contact Dr. Buck Gilcrease, Moak, Casey & Associates, at bjilcrease@moakcasey.com or by telephone at 512.485.7878.