



House Public Education Committee

The Honorable Brad Buckley
The Honorable Alma Allen
The Honorable Steve Allison
The Honorable Charles Cunningham
The Honorable Harold V. Dutton, Jr.
The Honorable Cody Harris
The Honorable Brian Harrison
The Honorable Cole Hefner
The Honorable Gina Hinojosa
The Honorable Ken King
The Honorable Oscar Longoria
The Honorable Matt Schaefer
The Honorable James Talarico

March 21, 2023

Subject: HB 1605

Honorable Members of the House Public Education Committee,

On behalf of the Coalition for Education Excellence (CEE), we would like to submit the following testimony in strong support of House Bill 1605.

CEE is a coalition of education policy and business organizations partnering with parents, teachers and school administrators, and state and local leaders across Texas to address current challenges around effective educational curricula for grades K-12 in Texas.

HB 1605: A Critical Solution for Improving Texas Education

CEE fully supports HB 1605. As steadfast advocates for Texas' 5.4 million students, we strongly believe in the need to improve grade-level learning in Texas classrooms. High-Quality Instructional Material (HQIM) and increased academic rigor play important roles in preparing students for life after high school, whether they pursue college or a career. HB 1605 addresses pressing problems facing our state's education system, including:

1. Students Learning Below Grade Level

Too many Texas students fail to meet grade-level expectations, with only 40% of students proficient in math and 52% of students proficient in reading in 2022.¹ These academic shortfalls can follow them for the rest of their lives, from reduced earning potential to constrained career

¹ <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/news-releases/news-2022/tea-releases-2022-grades-3-8-staar-results>



prospects. HB 1605 provides a solution to an often-overlooked opportunity in Texas classrooms: the lack of quality, grade-level curriculum available to teachers and students.

The New Teacher Project (Tntp) found that only 17% of students' elementary reading instructional materials were at grade level², leading to learning gaps that are easily identified when reviewing state assessments. To improve student achievement, we must first improve instructional materials.

School systems across the state are making this shift. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a historic infusion of federal funds, 113 school systems have participated in a Texas pilot to increase access to HQIM in the 2022-23 school year. By swapping curricula alone, TEA reports that these districts improved grade-appropriate assignments by 39 percent.³ Passing HB 1605 would ensure that all Texas school systems could opt into accessing free, quality, grade-level materials to ensure we are adequately preparing students for the future.

2. Burnout among Texas Teachers

Furthermore, this bill can provide much-needed relief to teachers. In 2021, the state lost approximately 43,000 teachers due to early retirement and resignation⁴ – a new state record. This trend is likely to continue as 77% of Texas teachers surveyed indicate they are seriously considering leaving the profession. Of those who have seriously considered leaving, 93% have actively taken steps to do so.⁵

One major factor contributing to this attrition rate is burnout, as noted in the Teacher Vacancy Taskforce, which met over 2022 to develop recommendations for a thriving teacher workforce. On average, teachers work 54 hours a week; and report spending up to 10 hours⁶ searching for and developing curricular resources. This workload is unsustainable and is contributing to Texas' growing teacher shortage.

The Task Force specifically calls out providing access to and support for HQIM in its recommendations. We support the Task Force's findings and believe HB 1605 achieves the worthwhile goal of decreasing teacher workload by improving the basic curriculum for classrooms.

3. Lack of Transparency for Parents

Finally, passing HB 1605 would significantly improve the transparency and accountability of our public education system for parents, which sometimes sends conflicting messages. Many students receive As and Bs on their coursework, for instance, but do not pass state assessments, and parents are left wondering why.

² <https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/>

³ https://tlchouse.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=46&clip_id=23368

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/22/teachers-are-in-the-midst-of-a-burnout-crisis-it-became-intolerable.html>

⁵ <https://charlesbuttdn.org/what-were-learning/2022TXTeacherPoll/>

⁶ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teachers-told-us-how-they-rack-up-those-54-hours-of-work-each-week/2022/04>

THE COALITION FOR EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

HB 1605 would provide insight into classroom content and give parents the tools necessary to actively participate in their student's learning and reinforce key concepts at home.

CEE members are committed to ensuring Texas students and teachers have access to the grade-level curricula needed to bring rigor and reduced workloads to the classroom. Passing HB 1605 is a critical step in the right direction.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support with you.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for Education Excellence

