



September 6, 2023

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Investments in educators and school finance in a Special Legislative Session

Dear Governor Abbott,

The Commit Partnership and the 16 organizations undersigned respectfully request you to consider including the following strategic educator investments and targeted school finance adjustments on the call should you convene the Legislature for an upcoming special session on education issues. These proposals received extensive support from both chambers during the 88th Regular Session and have been recently evaluated by the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment. They are included as recommendations outlined in its [initial report](#).

- **Provisions related to the [Teacher Vacancy Task Force Recommendations](#)** - Texas classrooms are confronted by staffing shortages and of the approx. 370,000 teachers educating Texas's 5.4 million students an increasing number enter the classroom uncertified (now 1 in 3) and many have less than 5 years of experience (35%).¹ As a consequence, you wisely convened the *Texas Teacher Vacancy Task Force (TVTF)* in 2022. Following a year's worth of strong work, the Legislature now has the opportunity to implement key recommendations to bolster the profession and develop a high-quality educator workforce:
 - **Teacher Incentive Allotment Expansion** - Legislation in the 88th Regular Session (HB 11, SB 9, & HB 100) included supporting and incentivizing strategic compensation by expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA; HB 3, 86R), a program you've embraced, which allows LEAs to enable top-performing teachers to earn high salaries some in excess of \$100,000 annually. Roughly one-third of school systems are approved or in the process of designing their own Local Designation Systems to draw down the Teacher Incentive Allotment.² Strengthening TIA by increasing funding across designation levels, adding a fourth designation tier of 'effective' to allow an estimated additional 75,000 teachers to be eligible, and developing a grant program to help increase the number of eligible teachers will support the recruitment and retention of Texas' most effective educators. Additionally, bolstering requirements for the state to provide technical assistance to expand TIA participation would create a pathway for more of the states' top teachers to earn more under the allotment.
 - **Teacher Residency Program Support** - Creating a sustainable, affordable teacher residency pathway to ensure more students have access to teachers who receive strong, on-the-job preparation can decrease historic attrition occurring across Texas. Given that teachers are the greatest in-school factor influencing student achievement, a focus on rigorous teacher pathways

¹ TAPR, Texas Education Agency, 2021-22; Employed Teacher Attrition and New Hires, Texas Education Agency, 2011-12 through 2022-23; Newly Certified and New Hires Dashboard, Texas Education Agency, 2022-23.

² Texas Impact Network, "HB3 Implementation Dashboard." <https://commitpartnership.org/dashboard/hb3>; populated with most updated data from the Texas Education Agency.

(through the establishment of the Residency Partnership Program and Allotment) can strengthen and diversify the profession while improving student learning and outcomes.

- **Additional Workforce Supports** - Legislation in the Regular Session (HB 11, SB 9, & HB 100) also included several other data-driven benefits to support the educator workforce, as recommended by the TVTF, such as allowing teachers' children to be eligible for free PreK, increasing the Mentor Program Allotment, and providing waivers for the cost of certification fees for candidates receiving certification in bilingual or special education.
- **Strategic, students-first investments** - Under your leadership, HB 3 (86R) made a historic investment in Texas schools through targeted, student-centered allocations while providing optional innovative programming to further boost student performance. Texas must continue to invest in what works, while making adjustments to better address the critical and current needs of education systems:
 - **Early Education Allotment Adjustment** - Both HB 11 and HB 100, as discussed in the 88th Regular Session, modified the Early Education Allotment (EEA; HB 3, 86R) by adding PreKindergarten students to the formula calculations, in addition to Kindergarten-3rd grade students. This modification can help ensure more LEAs take advantage of offering high-quality, full-day PreK for interested and eligible students. In turn, this will support increased Kindergarten Readiness in Texas – eligible students that attend PreK are 1.7x more likely to be Kindergarten Ready than their peers who did not attend (as of SY21-22).³
 - **Additional Days School Year Program Adjustment** - HB 100 also built on successes from the Additional Day School Year Program (ADSY; HB 3, 86R) by making the implementation requirement more feasible. Early adopters of ADSY have seen promising student success: campuses that leveraged ADSY funds to redesign their school calendars outperformed district accountability scores by an average of 11 points.⁴ Adjusting the base calendar to 175 days (currently 180) allows more LEAs to participate and close achievement gaps.
 - **Compensatory Education Allotment Weight Increase** - Increasing the weights for the Compensatory Education Allotment (CEA; HB 3, 86R), as outlined in the final version of HB 100, will provide school systems additional funding so that they can better serve students with the greatest needs due to income. Notably, the Legislature recently passed HB 1416 (Bell / Paxton) which requires school systems to provide supplementary instruction to all students who are academically behind if they receive CEA funding. Therefore, increasing this funding source stands to provide essential dollars so that more Texas school systems can implement high-impact tutoring with fidelity and provide academic support to the students furthest behind, especially as federal pandemic relief funds expire in the near term.

Beyond an increase in the Basic Allotment, these policy provisions received broad support during the 88th Regular Session, fall within the contingency appropriations in HB 1 (88R), and continue to be highlighted by members as priorities for supporting Texas students and schools with the greatest needs. As you consider reconvening the Legislature this fall, it is our hope that you will include these investments listed above as part of your proclamation.

³ TAPR, Texas Education Agency, 2022.

⁴ Texas Education Agency Materials, 2022.



Texas's 5.4 million students remain our state's greatest asset. Investing wisely in them and the educators that teach them can improve postsecondary success rates and will reap benefits for our citizens and the economy for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Greer
Managing Director, Policy & State Coalition
The Commit Partnership

Additional Supporters:

