

Testimony FOR Senate Bill 26
Senate Education Committee
February 20, 2025

Chairman Creighton, Vice Chair Campbell, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Philanthropy Advocates and the **14** organizations undersigned thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment for Senate Bill 26. Research consistently shows that the **classroom teacher is the most important in-school factor affecting student growth**¹, and we believe that all students deserve access to an effective and well-prepared teacher. **SB 26 provides critical changes to improve the retention of our teacher workforce through its targeted investments in teacher compensation and benefits.**

Our Teacher Workforce Challenge

By 2031, 63% of Texas jobs will require a credential beyond a high school diploma, and yet only 25% of our eighth graders earn these credentials within six years after graduation.² Although our need for educational attainment beyond high school is increasing, our supply of well-prepared teachers is plummeting.³ Just last year, **56% of new teachers had no certification or preparation** statewide.⁴ The number was 75% in rural districts.⁵ Retaining experienced and effective educators is crucial to helping reduce the reliance on high numbers of first-year educators, most of whom are not going through rigorous preparation pathways.

The impacts of these underprepared teachers have been detrimental to the learning of Texas students. **Students taught by an uncertified teacher lose up to four months of learning in math and six months of learning in English/Reading.**⁶ With outcomes like this and the dramatic expansion of underprepared teachers, we shouldn't be surprised to see that Texas students are at a competitive disadvantage nationally on the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for 4th and 8th grade reading and 8th grade math.⁷

SB 26 Supports Strategic Compensation and Teacher Benefits

SB 26 builds on the work of the Teacher Vacancy Task Force from 2022-23 by addressing teacher compensation and other factors impacting teacher pay. Recognizing that increasing compensation for all educators is foundational for both recruitment and retention, SB 26

¹ Hattie, J. (2017). [Hattie Ranking: 252 Influences and Effect Sizes Related to Student Achievement](#).

² Carnevale, A.P et al. (2023). After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031. Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce. [After Everything Projections 2031 National Report](#).; Texas Talent Trajectory (T3). 8th Grade Cohort Data: 2013 (2024). [The Texas Talent Trajectory \(T3\)](#).

³ [Texas Education Agency Annual Report](#) (2024).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Van Overschelde, J.P., and Lopez, M. (2024). [Unlicensed teachers now dominate new teacher hires in rural Texas schools](#).

⁶ Kirksey, J. (2024). [Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas](#).; Marder, M., Torres, L.G., Martinez, C., (2024). [Beyond the Tipping Point: The Rise of the Uncertified Teachers in Texas](#).

⁷ [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) (2024).

proposes targeted salary increases focused on retaining experienced teachers through the new Teacher Retention Allotment. The additional funding for salaries provides an important boost for teachers with three-to-five years of experience with an even more significant boost for those with more than five years of experience. Efforts to retain teachers are particularly needed within the first five years of their career – when data shows they are most likely to leave the profession and when their effectiveness is most likely to improve dramatically.

SB 26 supports and incentivizes school system engagement in strategic compensation by expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). The TIA was established by the 86th Legislature in House Bill 3 to provide school systems strategic compensation models to enable top-performing teachers to earn high salaries. Through current TIA designations, participating districts can receive a \$3,000 - \$32,000 allotment per designated teachers, where 90% of this must go to teacher compensation. The Teacher Incentive Allotment has proven to have a positive effect on teacher retention as well as student achievement.⁸ TIA-designated teachers have a higher retention rate of 89% compared to a non-TIA-designated teacher retention rate of 81%. The positive early data on the Teacher Incentive Allotment show that it's having a positive effect on both teachers and students.

SB 26 expands this allotment by increasing the amounts for each designation of the system and adding a new designation level. The bill also strengthens requirements for the state to provide technical assistance to expand TIA participation, creating a pathway for more teachers to receive pay bumps under the allotment. We appreciate the targeted support to increase participation in the program, particularly for rural school systems with less capacity, via increased technical assistance grants. Although 55% of school districts participating in TIA are rural, the additional support will help spread the impact of TIA to more teachers and more districts.

SB 26 creates additional benefits for teachers beyond salary increases. For example, the bill extends support to teachers by allowing the children of classroom teachers employed by a public school to be eligible for enrollment in Pre-Kindergarten. This is yet another important effort to increase the retention of our current teacher workforce.

The Teacher Incentive Allotment has helped propel innovation and modernization of district compensation systems, and we are at a point where similar efforts are needed to modernize how we **prepare and attract** our next generation of educators. We appreciate Chairman Creighton and the Committee's ongoing work to address our crisis of uncertified teachers and look forward to working with you and the Committee to support legislation to incentivize high-quality educator preparation programs in future legislation.

A comprehensive approach to addressing both retention and preparation together is essential to ensuring our students have the educators they need to reach their full potential. We appreciate your consideration as SB 26 advances through the legislative process.

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⁸ Kirksey, J. J., Lansford, T., Crevar, A. R., & Mansell, K. E. (2024). From incentive to impact: The Texas Teacher Incentive Allotment's path to improved retention and achievement.

Organizations Supporting SB 26 Written Testimony:



Teach For America
Texas



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at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

