



## Written Testimony FOR Senate Bill 2253

Senate Education Committee

April 1, 2025

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

On behalf of Educate Texas and the **13** undersigned organizations, we appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2253. Research consistently shows that teachers are the most influential in-school factor impacting student success,<sup>1</sup> and it is essential that every Texas student has access to a well-prepared, effective educator.

### **The Growing Crisis of Underprepared Teachers**

In Texas, an increasing number of classrooms are staffed by educators who lack the necessary preparation to succeed. In the 2023-24 school year, 56% of newly hired teachers were uncertified,<sup>2</sup> with rates reaching as high as 75% in rural districts.<sup>3</sup> Many of these uncertified teachers begin teaching with no prior classroom experience or formal training. This increasing dependence on educators who lack essential preparation fuels higher teacher turnover and weakens student outcomes, especially in districts already struggling to fill vacancies.

### **The Cost of Underprepared Teachers**

Texas currently provides minimal funding for teacher preparation, leaving aspiring educators to choose pathways based on cost and convenience rather than quality. The results of this trend are clear:

- **Teacher retention suffers:** 64% of uncertified teachers leave the profession within five years, nearly double the attrition rate of those who complete a traditional preparation route.<sup>4</sup>
- **Student learning declines:** Students taught by new, uncertified teachers lose the equivalent of three months of learning in math and four months in reading.<sup>5</sup> The need for well-prepared teachers is at an all-time high, with only 53% of students on grade level in reading and 41% in math last year.<sup>6</sup>
- **Long-term economic harm:** For every 10% increase in a student's exposure to uncertified teachers, their future earnings drop by 5% within eight years of high school graduation.<sup>7</sup>

### **SB 2253: Targeted Solutions to Strengthen Teacher Preparation**

SB 2253 presents an urgent opportunity to strengthen Texas' teacher workforce by introducing key incentives to attract and retain well-prepared educators. By investing in strategic reforms and funding

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<sup>1</sup> Hattie, J. (2017). Hattie Ranking: 252 Influences and Effect Sizes Related to Student Achievement.

<sup>2</sup> Texas Education Agency Annual Report (2024).

<sup>3</sup> Van Overschelde, J.P., and Lopez, M. (2024). Unlicensed teachers now dominate new teacher hires in rural Texas schools.

<sup>4</sup> Texas Education Agency Annual Report (2024).

<sup>5</sup> Kirksey, J. (2024). Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas

<sup>6</sup> Texas Academic Performance Report (2024)

<sup>7</sup> Kirksey, J., (2025). The Economic Benefits of High-Quality Teacher Preparation in Texas. Texas Tech University.

high-quality pathways into teaching, the bill not only elevates the profession but also lays the foundation for long-term teacher retention. Most importantly, SB 2253 provides incentives through funding for teacher candidates, school districts, and high-quality educator preparation programs, to help significantly reduce Texas' reliance on uncertified teachers while providing incentives for our most effective preparation routes.

SB 2253 codifies the recommendations put forward by Governor Abbott's [Teacher Vacancy Task Force](#), presenting a comprehensive suite of strategies designed to fortify Texas' teacher workforce. These include:

- **Dedicated Funding for Teacher Preparation:** Creates the Preparing and Retaining Educators through Partnership (PREP) Allotment to provide financial support for teacher candidates, help districts partner with high-quality preparation programs, and offer sustainable funding for teacher pipelines.
- **Expansion of High-Impact Models:** Expands successful models like teacher residencies, grow-your-own programs, traditional university pathways, and high-quality alternative certification programs to enhance recruitment and training efforts.
- **Mentorship Support:** Increases funding for mentorship programs that connect early-career teachers with experienced educators to improve retention and effectiveness.
- **Differentiated Pay:** Differentiates pay for certified and uncertified beginning teachers, ensuring compensation reflects their level of preparation and expertise.

## **Conclusion**

Texas has a unique opportunity to strengthen the teacher workforce with strategic, sustainable solutions. Without dedicated investments in effective teacher preparation, high turnover rates, declining student outcomes, and insufficient access to effective educators will continue to worsen.

SB 2253 is a bold and necessary step toward stabilizing the teacher pipeline, supporting effective educators, and ensuring that every Texas student is taught by a well-prepared teacher. We are grateful for the Legislature's commitment to addressing this issue by providing school districts with the financial support they need to expand high-quality certification pathways. This investment in our teacher workforce is an investment in the future of Texas.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Educate Texas stands ready to support this effort and welcomes any questions from the Committee.

**Sincerely,**

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*Senior Director, Policy & Programs, Educate Texas*

Support Organizations:

