

October 9, 2023

Senate Committee on Finance
Chairwoman Joan Huffman
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Chairwoman Huffman and Senate Finance Committee Members,

We are writing to thank you for your attention to the public school finance challenges occurring in Texas. While you are likely aware of the need for increased funding amidst 40-year record inflation, we want to ***draw your attention*** to the misconception that these challenges do not affect even the highest-performing districts in Texas. The truth is, our districts, which have excelled due to the amazing opportunities we are able to offer our students, are in jeopardy. Without an increase in funding, we are at risk of cutting award-winning programs, being unprepared for fast growth, and reducing opportunities for Texas students.

Please consider the following as you begin to evaluate public school finance needs:

Most importantly, **we need an increase to the basic allotment** in order to keep pace with inflation. We simply cannot keep up with significantly-rising costs without an increase in funding. While the cost of living has increased for all of us, the cost to appropriately educate our students is also increasing - with no additional help in funding. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

We need recapture reform. Our districts are struggling to make ends meet while we send a significant portion of our funding to the state. Reduction in recapture payments due to property tax reduction does not help our schools. Please consider additional reduction in recapture, a prepayment discount, and a return of some of this year's \$2.5 billion recapture surplus back to the districts from which it was received.

We need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts face a funding cliff.

We need an increase in school safety funding. Safety requirements are just one of the unfunded mandates districts are struggling to pay for amidst rising costs and increasing requirements from the state.

We need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises.

In addition to those broad-spectrum needs, other concerns include additional unfunded mandates like technology, accountability and relief on STAAR testing, and school safety funding flexibility.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting **all** Texas schools. Recently, you might have received a [joint letter](#) from 52 school districts, echoing these same requests. We need help now. Please use the State of Texas' record surplus to fully fund our schools and protect educational opportunities for Texas children.

Courtney Carpenter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Argyle ISD



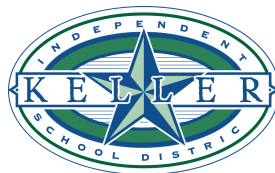
Sam Slaton
School Board President
Argyle ISD

Brad Schnautz, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD



Shannon Braun
School Board President
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD

John Allison
Superintendent of Schools
Keller ISD



Charles Randklev, Ph.D.
School Board President
Keller ISD

Lane Ledbetter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Carroll ISD



Cam Bryan
School Board President
Carroll ISD