

Written Testimony of Bob Popinski
Director of Policy
Raise Your Hand Texas

Before the House Public Education Committee
The Honorable Dan Huberty, Chair
March 12, 2019

House Bill 3 by Representative Dan Huberty
Position: Support

KEY POINTS

- Raise Your Hand Texas supports House Bill 3 because it provides substantial flexible funding for public schools, high-quality full-day pre-Kindergarten programs for eligible four-year-olds, and uniform tax rate compression for all taxpayers.
 - Raise Your Hand also supports additional funding for students needing it most, including our state's economically disadvantaged children, students with dyslexia, and dual language learners.
 - While we recognize current and future resource limitations, Raise Your Hand would also support a funding structure that allows our school finance system to maintain equity and automatically keep pace with inflation over time.
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Chairman Huberty and Members of the Committee:

Raise Your Hand Texas supports HB 3 and the substantial investment it makes in public education. We would like to thank Chairman Huberty and the members of the House Public Education Committee for their support of a considerable increase in overall funding and work on many important policy issues within this legislation, including language that prioritizes local discussions about early childhood literacy.

This bill provides much-needed flexible funding through a basic allotment increase for schools that supports the growing demands placed on students, teachers, and school staff. This funding will allow school districts to provide salary increases to teachers and

staff, make an additional investment in programs, and meet the demands of other budgetary pressures.

Other provisions of HB 3 that will have significant impact on public education include:

Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten

Raise Your Hand is supportive of the provision requiring school districts to offer full-day pre-Kindergarten to eligible four-year-olds and its funding through an early childhood allotment formula. This important program will benefit the entire state once all schools can fully implement it. We encourage this committee and members of the legislature to also think about the facility needs necessary to expand this program over time.

Early Childhood Literacy Plan

Raise Your Hand Texas is supportive of the early childhood literacy plan requiring school boards to set specific goals for third-grade reading performance. Having a coordinated implementation plan and providing professional development for classroom teachers not meeting these goals are important measures to improve our state's proficiency in early reading.

Additional Resources for Students with the Highest Needs

Raise Your Hand is also supportive of mechanisms to flow additional dollars to students needing it the most. The new compensatory education allotment provision providing additional funding to students in campuses with a higher density of economically disadvantaged students is a sound approach. We understand the technical aspects of making this work appropriately and encourage language in the bill to make sure schools can accurately budget for the compensatory education allotment prior to full implementation of this new approach by the Texas Education Agency. We are also supportive of the new funding weights for students with dyslexia and dual language learners.

Blended Learning Grant

Raise Your Hand is supportive of the blended learning grant program because we believe blended learning represents a critical ingredient to transition to 21st century student-centered classrooms, combining the best of classroom teaching and online learning to personalize instruction for every student.

Potential Modifications

Raise Your Hand recognizes current and future state resource limitations, but we would also support a funding structure that allows our school finance system to keep pace with increasing cost pressures over time. Delinking the golden penny yield from the Austin Independent School District removed the only automatic funding driver for schools. We ask that you consider some form of automatic funding driver in either the golden penny yield or basic allotment in order to maintain funding growth in the system.

Once again, we would like to thank Chairman Huberty and the entire House Public Education Committee for their work on HB 3. We believe it is the appropriate framework for school funding in Texas and the substantial investment made will provide valuable resources for our public schools to continue to meet the high demands and expectations we place on them.

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