

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

Before the Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Larry Taylor, Chair
April 25, 2019

Senate Committee Substitute for House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 4
Position: On

KEY POINTS

- Raise Your Hand Texas supports a school funding plan that provides substantial flexible funding for public schools, funds high-quality full-day pre-Kindergarten programs for eligible four-year-olds, and ensures uniform tax rate compression for all taxpayers in a manner the state can afford.
 - We support flowing additional funding to the students needing it most, including our state's economically disadvantaged children, students with dyslexia, and dual language learners.
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Chairman Taylor and Members of the Committee:

We would like to thank Chairman Taylor and the members of the Senate Education Committee for undertaking this challenging revision of our school funding system. While there are several aspects of the committee substitute that Raise Your Hand fully supports like full-day pre-kindergarten and the updated compensatory education allotment, there are some policy initiatives that give us pause.

Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten Funding

Raise Your Hand supports the provision requiring school districts to offer full-day pre-Kindergarten to eligible four-year-olds through an early childhood allotment. This is an important policy and a program that will be beneficial to the entire state once schools can fully implement it.

Additional Funding to Students Needing it the Most

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 this allotment. We are also supportive of the new funding weights for students with dyslexia and dual language learners.

Property Tax Reform and Education Funding

Raise Your Hand understands the need to provide taxpayers with meaningful property tax reform. Any reduction in property taxes should be equal and uniform across the state to both maintain Texas as an attractive business destination and fairly benefit all taxpayers. We believe in upholding the Constitutional standard that “there must be a direct and close correlation between a district’s tax effort and the educational resources available to it; in other words, **districts must have substantially equal access to similar revenues per pupil at similar levels of tax effort.**” [emphasis added]

School Funding Drivers

Raise Your Hand supports a funding element that allows our school finance system to maintain equity and keep pace with inflation over time. By delinking the golden penny yield from the Austin Independent School District, the only inflation factor for school funding was removed. We ask that you consider linking some form of inflation factor to either the golden penny yield or basic allotment so school funding will keep up with inflation and other cost drivers.

CONTACTS

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