

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

FROM

# CAPITOL TO CLASSROOM:

MAKING AN IMPACT



During the **89th Legislative Session**, the legislature should prioritize policies that directly benefit the **5.5 million** public school students in Texas.

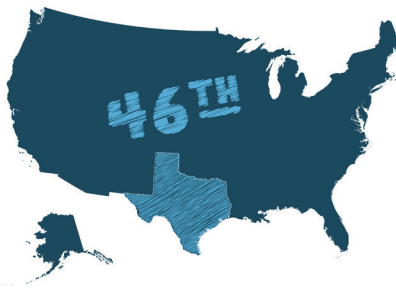
Decisions made during this session will have a lasting impact on our classrooms. Raise Your Hand Texas advocates for adequate school funding, support for our teachers, fully funding pre-Kindergarten, and updating our assessment and accountability system—all vital for cultivating a skilled workforce and fostering economic growth across our state.

## School Funding

Texas public schools are currently navigating a perfect storm of financial challenges: record inflation, the conclusion of federal stimulus funds crucial for post-pandemic recovery, declining enrollment, increased school safety requirements, and a host of other funding pressures beyond the control of local schools. While lawmakers last increased the Basic Allotment in 2019, inflationary pressures without subsequent adjustments mean that districts are effectively operating with \$1,300 less per student than they did five years ago. Consequently, Texas districts have been

forced to adopt deficit budgets or make cuts, threatening the elimination of essential programs, staff, and – potentially – even campus closures.

### Texas Ranking: 2024 NEA State Rankings Report



### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Increase state funding for public school students and education programs, with a particular focus on raising teacher pay
- ▶ Implement an automatic annual adjustment to the Basic Allotment – the foundation for per-student funding – to address inflation and the growing needs of our schools
- ▶ Reinvest state savings due to local school district property value growth back into public schools

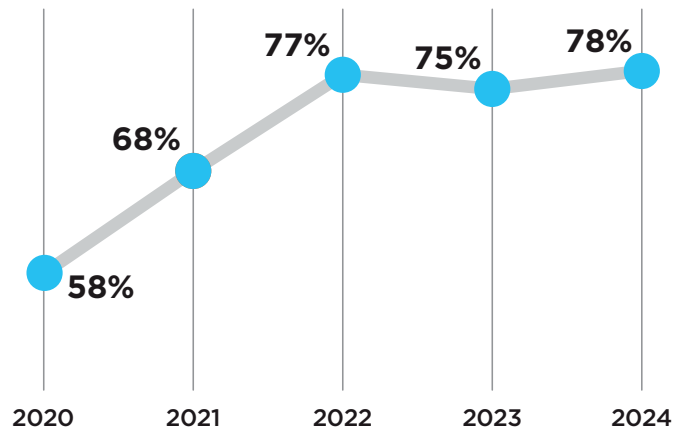
## Teacher Workforce

When we invest in our Texas teacher workforce, we invest in the future workforce of Texas. Teachers make the difference. They cultivate curiosity and brighten the future of Texas. Teachers also represent the single most important in-school factor impacting student outcomes, and high-quality teachers are strongly linked to student achievement, significantly increasing high school graduation rates, college completion, and salary earnings.

However, the health of our Texas teacher workforce faces challenges including recruitment issues, retention problems, and teacher shortages in critical areas, which has resulted in even more uncertified teachers and further strain on our already over-stretched teacher workforce.

### Teachers Considering Leaving the Classroom

% of Texas teachers seriously considering leaving



Source: Charles Butt Foundation 2024 Texas Teacher Poll

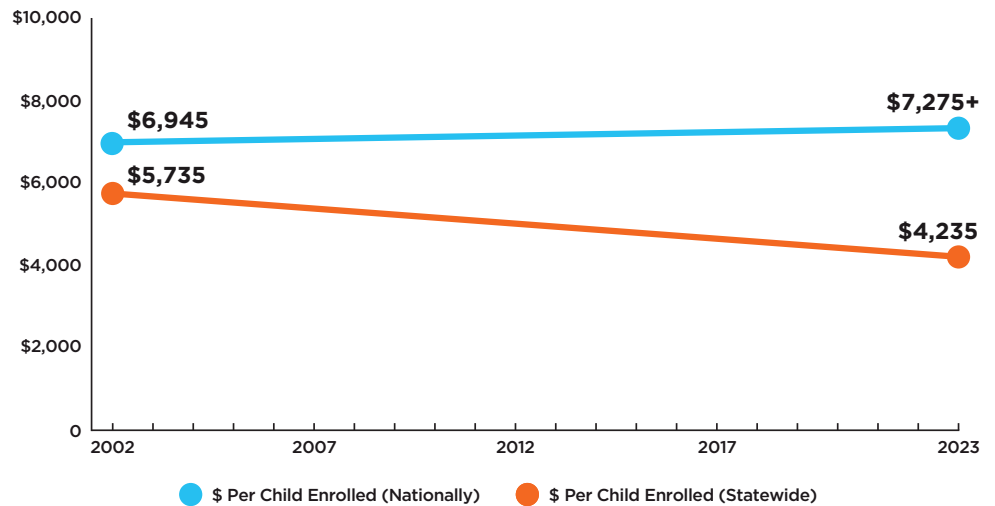
### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Support teacher retention through increased compensation and benefits packages of at least \$15,000
- ▶ Invest in teacher recruitment strategies, including scholarships for aspiring teachers
- ▶ Strengthen teacher development by raising the standards for all education preparation pathways and providing meaningful professional development opportunities

## Pre-Kindergarten

Pre-Kindergarten, also known as pre-K, forms the educational foundation for our youngest Texans. High-quality, full-day pre-K programs produce immediate and lasting educational benefits, such as meeting third-grade reading and math standards, graduating from high school, and attending college. Texas lawmakers recognized these benefits in HB 3 (86th Session) by requiring school districts to offer full-day pre-K and establishing the Early Education Allotment. However, the state still only funds pre-K programs based on half-day Average Daily Attendance, leaving districts to cover the rest of the cost. Though the Early Education Allotment supports pre-K programs, several important kindergarten through third-grade programs also compete for these funds.

## Texas is Falling Behind in Pre-K Spending



Source: National Institute of Early Education Research State of Preschool 2023 Yearbook

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Directly fund pre-K with full-day Average Daily Attendance (ADA) versus half-day ADA
- ▶ Expand the Early Education Allotment to include eligible pre-K students (currently kindergarten through third grade)
- ▶ Increase access to pre-K by raising the income eligibility cap
- ▶ Extend pre-K eligibility to the children of public school educators

## Assessment and Accountability

Texas public schools do so much more than prepare students for a single test on a single day. In addition to delivering high-quality core curriculum, public schools offer programming such as fine arts, extracurriculars, and dual language instruction. Beyond academics, Texas schools do the vital work of community and family engagement, addressing health and safety issues, and creating an environment where all children can thrive. Texas' current A-F accountability system ignores these indicators of school quality and oversimplifies the important work of school districts and campuses. Texans deserve an accountability system that increases the transparency of school performance for all valuable services that our public schools provide. The Texas Legislature can lead the way on assessments and accountability reform by reducing the emphasis on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and recognizing the many factors contributing to a great school and quality education.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Expand the scope of Texas' A-F accountability ratings system to include factors beyond STAAR test scores
- ▶ Limit STAAR test scores to 50% of any domain or the overall score for districts and schools in the state's accountability ratings system
- ▶ Remove all high-stakes testing consequences for high school students
- ▶ Design and implement a formative assessment that helps inform instruction throughout the school year without adding additional testing time and pressure

