



POSITIONS FOR THE 87TH SESSION

The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) was established in 1946 and is the trusted resource for school finance and operations in Texas. TASBO has over 7,000 members from school districts, charter schools, regional service centers and other entities and is recognized as “*THE* trusted resource in school finance and operations.”

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES SUMMARY

HOUSE BILL 3 EFFORTS MUST BE SUSTAINED

House Bill 3 included significant and meaningful changes for public education. It impacted every aspect of Texas schooling from employment and compensation to programming for students to setting expectations for performance. It will take time for these changes to meaningfully impact a system as large as Texas public education, where we educate nearly 5.5 million students, employ 363,000 teachers, and operate 8,800 campuses.

It is hard to over-state the ways in which COVID disrupted school district operations. It created increased costs for cleaning and PPE, brought with it a myriad of human resources challenges, and most importantly, seriously disrupted classroom learning. It has also disrupted the important House Bill 3 implementation efforts that were occurring across Texas. At the same time, the investments and changes included in House Bill 3 helped Texas school districts be more prepared to respond to the challenge and will help them recover more quickly if they are allowed to remain. Lawmakers should do everything they can to maintain stability and allow HB 3 improvements to take root.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINING FUNDING PROVIDED THROUGH HOUSE BILL 3

Prior to the passage of House Bill 3, the Texas school finance formulas had remained substantially unchanged for more than 30 years. The public, in fact, had become convinced that lawmakers could not make substantive changes without court intervention. Yet, Texas lawmakers rose to the challenge and completely overhauled the system. This session, the challenge will be sustaining the important investments made last session.

To address the challenges that lie ahead, TASBO supports:

- **Prioritize core funding formulas** included in House Bill 3, including the basic allotment and funding weights. If necessary, consider slower phase in of programs that have escalating costs in order to protect core funding.
- **Prioritize the maintenance of a stable, predictable funding formula.** Districts will be best able to make sound spending decisions if they can anticipate and budget for changes in revenue.
- **Preserve flexible funding.** Now more than ever, districts will need every tool they have to maintain services for students. Maximum flexibility will help them achieve this with fewer disruptions for students.

FOCUS ON MEANINGFUL TRANSPARENCY

Texas taxpayers deserve transparency from all levels of their government. TASBO supports initiatives designed to increase the public's understanding of the public education system and to streamline data collection to ensure efficiency, including:

- Clear reporting of the state's level of investment in the public education system that is calculated on a consistent basis over time;
- Maintaining ballot language that is clear, concise, and that avoids unnecessary confusion;
- Maintaining the May election date as an option for school district bond and board elections;
- Minimizing duplicative reporting requirements by the Texas Education Agency through the meaningful use of existing PEIMS data; and,
- The use of automated financial and academic reporting and forecasting tools, such as Forecast5 that highlight a district's academic and financial performance.

ATTRACT & RETAIN TALENT THROUGH COMPETITIVE SALARY AND BENEFITS

Public education in Texas is one of the largest business enterprises in the State. Public Schools employ more than 700,000 employees with varying roles and responsibilities. School officials are also tasked with addressing the needs of an increasingly complex student demographic. For better outcomes, Texas needs to support the workforce. TASBO supports:

- A school funding model which allows Districts and Charter Schools to maintain compensation increases provided through House Bill 3; and
- Increased investments as necessary to ensure actuarially sound retirement and benefit programs through the Teacher Retirement System.

FULLY RECOGNIZE THE LOCAL COST OF STATE INITIATIVES

Reducing unnecessary regulation would redirect activities from compliance to outcomes, thereby freeing up time and resources for value-added activities. TASBO supports:

- A system that fully analyzes, discloses and funds the true cost of implementation for new and changed requirements in laws, rules, and regulations; and
- Efforts to remove those regulations that serve as a distraction from the real mission of the public-school system.

Recognize School District Contributions to Economic Development

Texas school districts contribute to the state economy in numerous and significant ways, most importantly by helping create the educated workforce that will support Texas in the years to come. But they also serve as the largest employers in many communities and help set tax policy that can encourage investment in local communities that have had transformative impacts. Texas should allow this practice to continue by ensuring districts maintain their current abilities to participate in economic development incentives to attract business opportunities that create jobs, increase student enrollment, and increase the district's tax base.