

Good morning, Chairman Paddie and members of the committee. My name is Jodi Duron. I am the proud Superintendent of Elgin ISD. Today I am representing the membership of the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS), and my district, Elgin ISD. I am respectfully testifying **in opposition to** HB 749.

I am grateful for the partnership that we share with the associations that represent our interests during this legislative process. These associations – representing school boards and school superintendents – serve as our advocacy arm, and more importantly, our voice in matters of public policy that could potentially help or harm our schools and our local communities. They provide important perspectives and dedicated professionals who are policy experts on issues of accountability, curriculum, education law, and school finance.

I oppose HB 749 because it **selectively** censors certain publicly funded entities and ends the ability of school district leaders and other local government representatives to effectively and efficiently communicate with legislators through their nonprofit associations.

As a school district superintendent, I do not have time to read, analyze, track, and comment on 2,882 bills affecting school districts. That's how many bills last session mentioned school districts.

Nor do I have time to weigh in individually on each of the 881 bills in the House and Senate education committees or the 394 bills that moved out of those two committees last session.

That's why we have associations and registered professionals whose job it is to communicate on our behalf. They are our seat at the table. And any attempt to remove that seat can only be viewed as a means to censor the voice of our local communities.

While this bill claims to be a cost saving measure for taxpayers, I would contend that it does the exact opposite. My ability to be here today – ONE DAY – is essentially equivalent to the annual membership fees that specifically cover advocacy for the two organizations I previously mentioned that represent our interests for an entire legislative session. Otherwise, imagine the cost to taxpayers if I were here every Tuesday and Thursday when education bills are heard in the House and Senate. Or the cost to taxpayers in other parts of the state, like El Paso, the Panhandle, the Rio Grande Valley. They would likely incur flight and hotel costs to be here, exponentially increasing the cost to taxpayers.

I would also point out that **this bill especially harms smaller districts, which makes up the largest majority of schools in Texas.** Larger school districts can often hire someone in-house with the expertise to handle legislative matters. Smaller districts cannot. We rely on nonprofit associations for efficient communication. It saves us money and time.

Of further concern, this bill leaves out the publicly subsidized charter schools that will receive \$8.5 billion during the next biennium. There is no prohibition in this bill on charter school and charter school association lobbyists, many of which are run by out-of-state management companies.

Thomas Jefferson once said, “The government closest to the people serves the people best.” This bill essentially censors the voice of our local leaders and elected officials – those who are truly closest to the people they serve. If you truly want to save taxpayer dollars, I respectfully ask that you vote **no** on this bill. Thank you chairman Paddie and members of the committee for allowing me to testify today. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.