



April 5, 2021

RE: HB 4545 Instructional Materials Purchase, Outcomes-Based Funding, and Accelerated Learning Committees

Dear Chairman Dutton and members of the House Public Education Committee:

As a representative of the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), I am writing to respectfully express our opposition to HB 4545. A cornerstone priority of TASA membership is local control and flexibility, as school districts must be able to respond to the differing needs of students, educators, parents, and the communities they serve. HB 4545 impedes upon that cornerstone priority. Our main concerns are outlined below.

Carve outs from School District Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA)

TASA membership has a legislative priority opposing “carve outs” of a school district’s TIMA. Language in the bill that would allow the Commissioner to “contract on behalf of” independent school districts in the purchase of curriculum programs and other instructional tools would be considered a carve out of school districts’ TIMA. The same provision would also be a concern if it allows the Commissioner to distribute federal relief funds due directly to Texas school districts.

Replaces the Student Success Initiative System of Providing Resources with a One-Size-Fits-All System without Allocation for Needed Accelerated Instruction

Another TASA priority is to advocate for additional funding with local flexibility for state-required accelerated instruction in grades 3–8, as well as for end-of-course exam remediation. The provisions of HB 4545 remove flexibility and mandate a top-down and overly prescriptive approach without providing any funding to support the required accelerated instruction.

Hinders School District Human Resources and Staffing Systems

The provisions of HB 4545 do not consider the intricacies of local school staffing systems, which should remain under the jurisdiction of district leadership and school trustees within each school community. There are many nuances to staffing decisions, and allowing parents to “pick” their child’s teacher does not allow for the many subtleties of a student’s instructional needs nor for the local decisions in selecting teachers who best meet the needs of their students.

Creation of a Prescriptive “Strong Foundations Grant Program” for Pre-K — Grade 5 Campuses Without Knowing the Funding Source(s)

As with the concerns about school districts’ TIMA, the grant provision in HB 4545 would also be a concern if it allows the Commissioner to distribute federal relief funds due directly to school districts. The proposed grant program in HB 4545 is overly rigid and does not provide for local discretion on what is best for district student populations.

Outcomes-Based Funding=High Stakes for Students

Another TASA priority is to advocate for the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes, multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that have value for students, parents, and teachers, as well as flexible measures that local communities' value. Just as with HB 3 in 2019, TASA membership is opposed to outcomes-based funding which creates a high-stakes environment and encourages too much focus on one test. Rather than establishing a system that rewards students for improving standardized test scores, we believe that the reverse should be in place. We support a system that provides resources for those students known to be struggling prior to the state assessment, or any other assessment, in order to build up their capacity for achievement.

Thank you allowing us to share our concerns. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,



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