



March 22, 2023

Chairman Creighton and Member of the Senate Education Committee:

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) and the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS) appreciate the opportunity to provide input on **SB 9** as filed and respect Chairman Creighton's interest in providing a much-needed pay increase for classroom teachers as well as considerations of new avenues to attract and retain educators. TASA and TACS submit the following comments on some of the provisions contained in SB 9.

We appreciate the intent of the bill to provide a much-needed salary increase to classroom teachers. However, as filed there is no number included in the amount of a teacher pay increase but simply a placeholder. While there is a placeholder for a salary increase for teachers, it is critically important for the legislature to provide additional funding to schools for support staff, who also serve students in our public schools and provide much needed supports to Texas teachers. School bus drivers ensure students arrive to schools safely, food service employees ensure students have adequate nourishment for optimal learning, school custodians make sure buildings and classrooms are clean, and nurses and counselors provide vital services to students as well. This is just a sampling of non-teaching positions students need to thrive in Texas public schools who also deserve an increase in pay.

Like other industries throughout the state and country, Texas school districts have been negatively impacted by staffing shortages at every level. Prior to the pandemic, school districts across the state were already facing a teacher shortage as well as a shortage of bus drivers, substitute teachers, and other support staff that was only exacerbated by the pandemic.

Current staffing shortages requires an "all hands-on deck approach" as we navigate the staffing challenges while still providing high-quality instruction and services for students. Limiting the duty calendar at this time for all full-time teachers, counselors, and librarians will certainly have a negative affect on the much-needed services they provide to students.

In addition, it is impossible for school districts to anticipate and predict how a school year will play out 15 days prior to the beginning of instruction. Schools often close or must pivot instruction and services they provide due to unforeseen circumstances like Winter Storm Uri, hurricanes, flooding, a global pandemic, a campus lockdown, flu outbreaks confined to individual campuses, etc. When these types of events occur, districts will not be able to operate if teachers are unable to provide additional assistance. Also, there is simply no way to predict which days teachers may be out due to illness and leaving their colleagues to step in to ensure student learning and needs are prioritized.

School district leaders must balance many interests in ensuring students receive the education in which they are entitled. Student needs are paramount in public schools. At the same time,

school districts leaders must also balance the needs of the teachers, auxiliary staff, parents, community members and the state. Overly restricting the use of teacher time will hamstring administrators and prevent them from providing quality education and services to our students by limiting or micromanaging teacher workload at the state level. It will also put more of a burden on other school staff who too are in demand and critical to the mission of public education.

Teacher contracts serve not only to protect teachers but also to provide predictability for school districts in ensuring that classrooms are adequately staffed. More importantly, contracts serve to provide stability to students by ensuring there are teachers in classrooms to provide instruction. When issues arise as outlined in the bill relating to teachers leaving their classrooms, school districts most-often seek to accommodate teachers whenever possible, but student needs must be the first priority in these determinations. The provisions in SB 8 appear to discount student needs with a sole focus on teacher needs in these circumstances.

We appreciate the provision in the bill that provides for the retiree teacher reimbursement grant and hope there is adequate funding appropriated to ensure school districts are reimbursed for these costs. Being able to hire retirees is a welcome tool in assisting school districts manage the teacher shortage.

TASA and TACS appreciate the opportunity to provide input and look forward to working with Chairman Creighton and other members of the committee as this bill moves forward.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Amy Beneski  
(TASA)  
(512) 477-6361

Crystal White  
(TACS)  
(512) 440-8227