

**May 29, 2023**

Good morning. My name is Kevin Brown, and I am the Executive Director of the Texas Association of School Administrators.

This has been a difficult session for public education.

But one bright spot has been the strength and the courage of the bipartisan coalition in the Texas House that has stood up for our public schools against ESA vouchers.

The people of Texas owe tremendous thanks to the members of both parties who stood up and protected our public schools. Without their courage, supporters of private-school vouchers would have already begun to dismantle the public schools that serve every community and welcome all students.

The Texas Senate's inclusion of private-school vouchers in the last remaining school finance bill was a poison pill ... and they knew it.

In 2011, legislators made painful cuts to public education because they thought the state lacked the funding it would need. But in 2023, the state has more than enough revenue to make schools whole. It's just that state leaders chose to play a political game and hold schools hostage.

The bill proposed by the Senate ignores the constitutional obligation of the Texas Legislature. Article 7, Section 1 of the Texas Constitution calls for the support and maintenance of a system of public free schools. Nowhere does it say that the support of our public schools should be tied to funds flowing to private schools.

Schools are already preparing for the adoptions of their budgets—for about 25% of schools, those budgets are adopted in June. We are asking schools to adopt budgets during a time of great uncertainty as to what their funding will be. And it didn't have to be this way. The political games played by the Texas Senate have created this uncertainty.

The Texas House made it clear that they do not support private school vouchers, yet the Governor and the Senate tried to bully them into supporting a policy that their constituents did not want.

We give thanks for those House members and we ask them to stay strong.

And to the Governor and others pushing private-school vouchers, we urge you to drop these political games, stop trying to do something that will not benefit students, and focus instead on your constitutional obligation to support public schools for all students.