



January 28, 2025

Senate Committee on Education K-16
201 E. 14th Street, Suite 440
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: SB 2, Written Testimony

Dear Chairman Creighton and Members of the Senate Committee on Education K-16:

The membership of the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) and the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS) appreciate the dedication and hard work of this committee on education issues as well as the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 2 as filed.

Our organizations have long opposed vouchers and similar programs such as Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) that divert public tax dollars to private entities, or homeschooled students, with little or no accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or local communities. Our membership believes any entity that takes public tax dollars to educate students must adhere to the same enrollment requirements as public schools including the mandate that all students who reside within the boundaries of an independent school district (ISD) must be allowed to enroll in that district.

In addition, ISDs must administer STAAR and end-of course exams based on the state-developed curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that assess students' proficiency in reading, math, writing, science, and social studies. Campus and district A-F ratings are largely based on the results of these exams and can have negative financial implications for school districts whose students do not meet the stringent state standards. Students of any entity using taxpayer funds should be expected to demonstrate mastery of these same TEKS-based standards.

ISDs are subject to many state laws related to open government and transparency to keep taxpayers apprised of school business and to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. In addition, ISDs have elected school trustees who are directly accountable to local taxpayers in the operation of their schools and the academic growth of their students. While there are some provisions in SB 2 as filed that seek to prevent fraud and provide for annual audits,

we believe entities receiving tax dollars should adhere to the same laws as public school systems regarding financial transparency.

We are encouraged by the \$23 billion dollar surplus that could assist school districts that are struggling financially to better serve their students, teachers, and communities. At the same time, inflationary pressures over the last six years coupled with increased costs related to property insurance, gas prices, the growing number of students in need of special education services, and ongoing costs associated with school safety are stretching school district budgets very thin.

As explained above, TASA and TACS are respectfully submitting this written testimony in opposition to SB 2. While we may disagree with matters related to ESAs, we all want what is best for the schoolchildren of Texas. Our organizations look forward to working with the committee on other critical issues during this legislative session that will improve the educational outcomes for all Texas school children.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on SB 2. Please don't hesitate to contact either of us if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Amy Beneski
Deputy Executive Director
TASA

Dr. Crystal White
Executive Director
TACS