



# **Joint Testimony to House Public Education Committee in Opposition to Bills SB 3 & HB 28 That Censor Classroom Curriculum and Conversations**

**August 24, 2021**

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the House Public Education Committee,

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of over 25 organizations with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. We advocate at the local, state, and national levels for high-quality teaching, curriculum and instructional practices and bilingual education for emergent bilingual students (i.e., English learners), as well as fair funding and enhanced college access and success.

On behalf of the undersigned member and partner organizations, **we oppose SB 3, HB 28, and similar bills that censor classroom curriculum and conversations** on important topics, including race, racism, sexism, and truthfully comprehensive analysis of American history. We outline our concerns and alternative recommendations below:

## **SB 3 Creates an Expensive and Restrictive Civics Training Program**

SB 3 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to create a “civics training program” for teachers to learn how to comply with the restrictions in the law.

- The projected \$14.6 million for this program would be better spent on creating a research-based, inclusive civics program that is not restricted by the harmful prohibitions in SB 3.

## **Both Bills Remove Requirements to Learn About Diverse Communities**

SB 3 and HB 28 would strip most of the amendments to HB 3979 (87R) that require Texas students to learn more about the histories and contributions of Black, Indigenous, Latinx people and women in social studies.

- Students want to be able to learn about *their* communities, including the diverse people who are a part of the founding and evolution of our country. By stripping the diverse list of people and topics from the law, SB 3 and HB 28 dishonestly suggest to Texas students that the stories of communities of color, women, and others are not important parts of our collective story.

## **Both Bills Expand Restrictions in the HB 3979 Law to ALL K-12 Courses**

SB 3 and HB 28 expand the harmful restrictions in HB 3979 (87R) to *all* courses in kindergarten through 12th grades, including electives and innovative courses.

- The restrictions on classroom discussions about true history and current events, credit and extra credit for student participation in civics organizations, and teacher training would apply to innovative courses and elective courses, including African American Studies and Mexican American Studies. These courses have a proven track record to improve students' educational outcomes and postsecondary success.

### **Both Bills Expand Restrictions on Classroom Learning and Teacher Training**

SB 3 and HB 28 would prohibit school and state agency employees from training other teachers and staff members on certain topics related to racism, bias and historical facts about the founding of the United States. These bills also prohibit teachers in ALL subject areas (not just social studies teachers) from making those concepts part of their courses.

- The prohibited topics include many that are already part of standard diversity, equity and inclusion training in schools, businesses and government entities. The prohibition on discussing certain topics in class could shut down important conversations about history and current events could lead to students learning concepts that are harmful and historically inaccurate.

### **Both Bills Promote a Chilling Effect on Classroom Discussions**

SB 3 and HB 28 promote a chilling effect on teachers' ability to thoughtfully and knowledgeably guide classroom discussions on race and racial history in the U.S. Even though HB 3979 has not been officially implemented, school districts already have cancelled important courses and programs for students' civic education out of fear of the bill's restrictions.

- Civics education and programs offer valuable experiences for students to learn how to effectively participate in American democracy and their local communities. Quality civics education incorporates truthful accounts of American history to promote student engagement on the issues that matter most to their communities. The chilling effect of these bills compromises students' educational opportunities in their schools, and their exposure to valuable experiences that prepare them for postsecondary and life success.

### **HB 28 Imposes Burdensome and Redundant Parent Notification of Teaching Materials**

HB 28 would require school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to post lists of all teaching materials monthly for parental review, including for materials delivered or exhibited both in or out of the classroom, such as a school assembly.

- School districts and charters already make instructional materials available to parents. A monthly list imposes an administrative burden to local education agencies. Schools should instead have the time and resources to focus on supporting students' safe return to classrooms and their response to the ongoing pandemic.

### **SB 3 Creates Confusion in TEA Enforcement**

SB 3 would allow TEA to enforce certain requirements listed in the bill.

- Because SB 3 is vague, it is not clear how TEA will interpret the law and use its authority to enforce it. This could result in sanctions being used against some school districts and teachers.

We appreciate your consideration about how this legislation compromises students' learning and educational opportunities. We urge you to oppose SB 3 and HB 28.

*For questions, please contact TLEEC either through Ana Ramón (ana.ramon@idra.org), or Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., at IDRA (chloe.sikes@idra.org), or Fátima Menéndez, J.D., at MALDEF (fmenendez@maldef.org).*

*The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. The coalition convenes organizations and individuals who advocate in the interest of public school students at the local, state and national levels.*

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### **Supporting Organizations**

ACLU OF Texas	National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) – Tejas Foco
ARISE Adelante	National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter
Breakthrough Central Texas	OCA-Greater Houston
Black Lives Matter Houston	Teach Plus Texas
Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement (CCPPI)	Texas AFLCIO
Children’s Defense Fund -Texas	Texas American Federation of Teachers
CHILDREN AT RISK	Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)	Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
Common Cause Texas	Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC)
Dallas Afterschool	Texans for Asian American Studies Coalition
Deeds Not Words	Texas Freedom Network
Dr. Hector P. García G.I. Forum	Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
Education Opens Doors	Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Easterseals Central Texas	Texas NAACP
Every Texan	Texas Poor People’s Campaign
Fort Bent ISD Equity Coalition	The Autism Society of Texas
Girls Empowerment Network	The Education Trust in Texas
Houston Area Urban League	UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR)
Houston Community Voices for Public Education	Young Invincibles
Houston in Action	
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)	
Leadership ISD	
McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership	
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)	
Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA)	