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Testimony on the Pandemic's Effect on the State's Teacher Workforce

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I am Amanda Posson, a mother and taxpayer. I work at Every Texan as a policy analyst focused on raising standards for Texan workers. As a mother, I would like to state my concern with the state's inadequate funding for public education. As a result of systemic underfunding, Texas is unable to retain valuable education staff due to low pay and poor working conditions.

This school year, my fifth-grade daughter is rotating with another student between a desk and the floor due to an overcrowded classroom. Her portable classroom has 27 students plus a teacher. I called four other Austin ISD elementary schools, and those schools reported fifth grade classrooms with student-to-teacher ratios all ranging over 27 students, with one classroom at 39 students. My daughter's classroom is cramped and hot; there's not enough space to learn due to a high student-to-teacher ratio and outdated facilities.

The root of the problem is that Texas is not investing enough dollars per student in our schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, low teacher and education staff pay, and poor public school conditions. Every Texan and the Texas AFT found in their report, [The Lost Decade](#), that Texas' educators' salaries are, on average, down 4% when compared to 2010. Additionally, the report finds that 66% percent of teachers have considered leaving the profession; the 2022 Charles Butt Foundation [says](#) nearly 77% of randomly surveyed teachers reported wanting to leave the profession. We cannot provide every public school student with a quality public education if our teachers and staff are forced to quit due to a lack of pay, benefits, and quality working conditions. Ultimately, our education staff's working conditions are our children's learning conditions. Overcrowded classrooms impact our entire state's future.

As a taxpayer, I am angry and frustrated by the state's refusal to appropriately fund our public schools. The state should commission a study to evaluate the actual cost to educate students. Additionally, the state should spend more dollars per student and tax wealthy corporations for what they owe our public schools. I proudly pay my fair share of property taxes to support public education and other vital public services. Public education is the most important function of our democracy and state economy. It is unfair to taxpayers and parents when wealthy corporations do not pay what they owe our public schools, teachers, and students.

I urge the Texas legislature to increase the funding per public student, increase funding for special education and English Language Learners and appropriately resource facilities and infrastructure that improve the working conditions for our teachers and staff. Our teachers' working conditions are our students' learning conditions, and no child should have to learn in an understaffed, crowded classroom.