



## Testimony to the Senate K-16 Education Committee “On” SB 26

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Every Texan is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. We believe all Texans should have access to high-quality education that aids in their social and economic well-being.

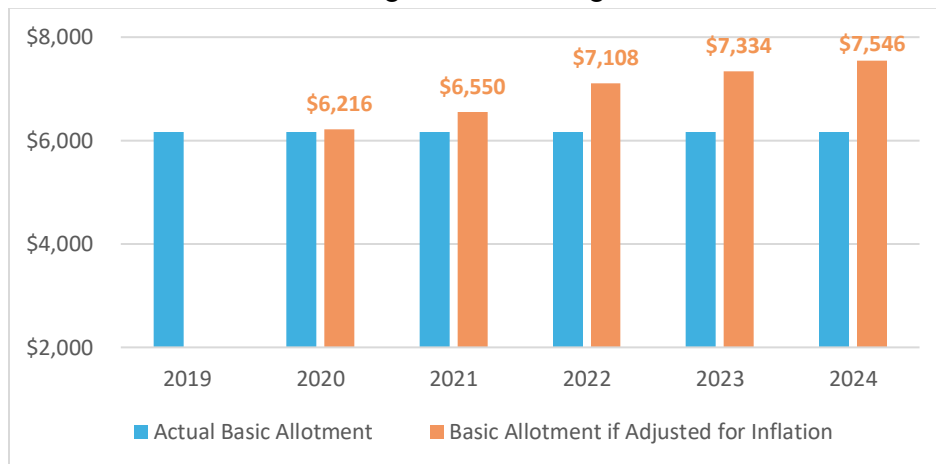
Teacher quality makes the greatest impact on the educational outcome of our students. In order to ensure that Texas schools are able to attract and retain the highest quality teachers, it’s important that teachers are adequately compensated. While SB 26 strives to improve teacher pay, the approach it takes is inequitable and does not recognize the important contributions made by non-teacher staff. For these reasons, Every Texan is not able to fully support this bill.

### Equitable Funding

The across the board pay raises in SB 26 is a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores the fact that every district has unique challenges, needs, and financial situations. The Teacher Incentive Allotment’s overemphasis on test scores raises equity concerns as well. Teachers who work with students facing significant challenges might not get the recognition they deserve if those efforts do not translate into higher test scores.

The most equitable way to improve teacher salaries is to increase the basic allotment. When funding flows through the basic allotment, that funding is multiplied by a series of weights (such as compensatory education, special education, and bilingual education). This ensures that districts with a greater number of students in special populations receive the resources those students need to be successful.

**Base Level Funding Has Not Changed in Five Years**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator using July estimates for 2020 through 2024.

The Legislature last increased the basic allotment in 2019. In the past several years, Texas has experienced record levels of inflation. The cost of housing, transportation, groceries, and healthcare has increased. Texas schools are not able to address these cost of living increases because the Legislature has kept school funding stagnant. If the basic allotment was adjusted for inflation, it would be \$7,546 today.

Every Texan also urges the Legislature to adopt enrollment-based funding rather than attendance-based funding. The Texas school finance system left nearly 460,000 students uncounted in the 2023-24 school year - or 8% of all students.<sup>i</sup> *For perspective, that's nearly the entire school population of Arkansas.*<sup>ii</sup> Our schools must be prepared to educate every child every day, yet they do not receive funding for every student enrolled.

### **It Takes a Village**

While the role of teachers is undisputable, they do not do it alone. Paraprofessionals, counselors, librarians, nurses, janitors, bus drivers, and cafeteria worker all do their part to ensure our schools run smoothly. Like teachers, other personnel are also impact by rising costs and stagnant funding. SB 26 makes absolutely no provisions to improve compensation for non-teacher staff.

Increasing the basic allotment and adopting enrollment-based funding allows districts the flexibility to make investments in their entire workforce.

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<sup>i</sup> Legislative Budget Board. Fiscal Size-Up 2024-25 and Texas Education Agency. Enrollment in Texas Public Schools, 2023-24.

<sup>ii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. The student enrollment in Arkansas is estimated to be 488,600 in Fall 2023.

[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_203.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_203.20.asp)