



**Testimony of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association  
to the Senate Education Committee  
February 20, 2025**

Submission from:  
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TCTA appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 26 by Creighton to the Senate Committee on Education.

**Key Comments and Recommendations:**

**As our top priority, TCTA appreciates that SB 26 includes a salary increase for teachers, especially with a focus on retaining experienced educators. We also appreciate the intent to ensure the increases are provided directly and ongoing. We want to work with the Chairman and committee to ensure this language is clear. (See suggested language in the appendix).**


**To ensure the Local Optional Teacher Designation System within TIA is a more effective and fair opportunity for a bonus, the state should require participating districts to make all teachers eligible, reduce burdensome subjective evaluations, and provide transparency so that teachers are fully informed about the requirements of the plan. Lawmakers should also consider elevating the TIA designation level for a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT).**

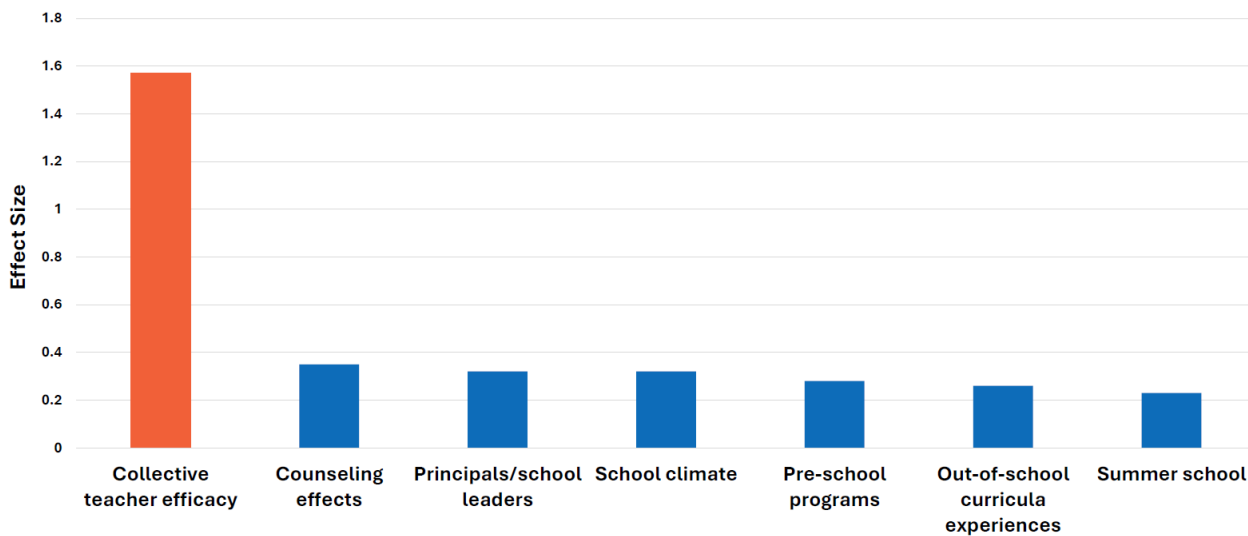
**We have concerns about the repeal of provisions in the current law that ensure that increases in state funding are in part directed to compensation for teachers and other non-administrative employees. This statute is an important way to ensure that funds are being appropriately directed to the classroom. [Specifically, Texas Education Code Section 48.051(c) (relating to requiring a school district to use a certain amount of its basic allotment for compensation).] This is especially relevant since the raises in SB 26 only address teachers, and not counselors, nurses, librarians, other professionals, or support personnel such as paraprofessionals. We respectfully request these provisions be reinstated.**



We appreciate that Chair Creighton and this committee are keeping the focus on teachers, and on compensation in particular. Our current teacher shortage, which has led to unprecedented levels of uncertified teachers in our schools, has highlighted that inadequate compensation and poor working conditions in Texas schools are making the profession increasingly unattractive.

Data collected by the TEA shows teachers are by far the single most important school-based factor affecting student outcomes. Yet, Texas teachers are leaving the profession at rates not seen since the great recession, causing schools to face shortages in high-quality educators. Per TEA data, teacher attrition in Texas is on the rise from 9% to 12% since the start of the pandemic. The number of uncertified teachers in the state’s public schools has risen by 29%. A recent Texas Tech University study highlighted that students lose up to four months of learning in reading and three months in math when they have a new teacher who is both uncertified and lacks experience working in a public school.

Teachers are the single most important in-school factor impacting student outcomes 



Adapted from Hattie, 2011

Replacing teachers is time-consuming, costly, and disruptive to student learning. Although the financial costs within a district or school can vary substantially – more than \$20,000 per teacher in an urban district – the most significant costs are those associated with separation, recruiting, hiring new teachers, and training replacements.<sup>i</sup>

**Teacher Pay**

In 2022, the Merrimack College Teacher Survey found 74% of teachers do not think their salary is fair for the work that they do, and more than half of teachers said they would not advise their younger self to pursue a career in teaching. Texas teachers face what the Economic Policy Institute calls the “Teacher Pay Penalty,” which is “how much less, in percentage terms, public school teachers are paid in weekly wages relative to other college educated workers (after accounting for factors known to affect earnings such as education, experience, and state residence).” In 2019, the



national average penalty was 19.2%, but these similar college graduates made 21.9% more than Texas teachers (Every Texan Report 2022). Furthermore, Texas ranks 30th in the nation for average teacher pay, \$8,828 less than the national average, according to the Southern Regional Education Board.

The low satisfaction levels of teachers already in the classroom may affect the pipeline of future teachers. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined by about a third over the past decade, and experts say that is in part due to the perception of teaching as a low-paid, thankless career (The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 2022). According to an ACT survey, the top reasons high school and college students who want to become teachers choose not to are low pay and a lack of career advancement.

The most direct and important way to meaningfully support educators is to provide a significant, sustainable, and ongoing increase in pay to retain teachers and attract more students to the teaching profession. According to a 2022 survey from the EdWeek Research Center, six out of 10 teachers say that the compensation strategy that would be the most effective in encouraging them to stay in the profession is a base salary increase that exceeds cost of living increases. In a recent informal survey of members, TCTA teachers expressed that a \$5k salary increase would not be sufficient to make a positive impact.

The Texas Legislature has at times recognized the singular importance of teachers when crafting school finance legislation by explicitly directing school districts to raise teacher salaries. Otherwise, history suggests that teachers will not receive their fair share of investment in schools. We believe the intent of SB 26 is to provide a direct, ongoing pay increase to teachers with 3 or more years of service. However, we are concerned about how this bill as currently worded will play out in future years. Recommended language that has been used successfully in previous bills is included in this testimony.

A TCTA analysis of school districts' operating expenditures shows how teacher salaries have not kept pace. (The analysis of expenditures excludes increases in federal funding attributable to ESSER.)

COMPARISON OF INCREASES IN TEACHER SALARIES TO INCREASES IN STATE AND LOCAL EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL
Increases are aggregate percentage increases above the 2001 school year.
(Prepared by Texas Classroom Teachers Association)

Table with 9 columns: School Year, Average Teacher Salary, % Increase from 2000, Teacher Salary per Pupil, % Increase from 2000-01, Operating Expenditures without ESSER, Operating Exp per Student without ESSER, % Increase from 2000, Per pupil teacher salary as % of op exp per student w/o ESSER. Rows include years from 2001 to 2011.



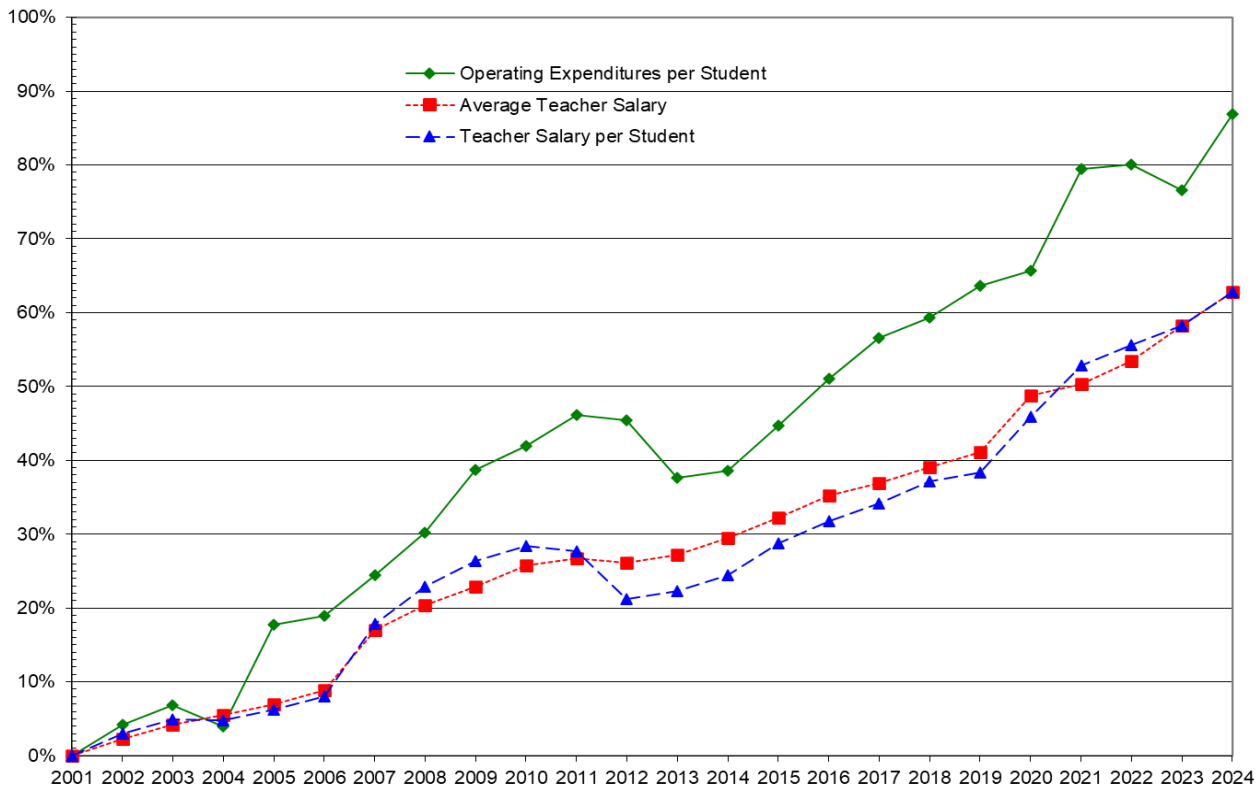
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2012	48,375	26.1%	\$3,141	21.2%	\$42,804,942,407	8,599	45.4%	41.5%
2013	48,821	27.3%	\$3,170	22.3%	\$41,199,344,944	8,144	37.7%	44.4%
2014	49,692	29.5%	\$3,227	24.5%	\$42,115,353,056	8,200	38.6%	44.3%
2015	50,715	32.2%	\$3,337	28.7%	\$44,633,165,100	8,558	44.7%	43.6%
2016	51,891	35.3%	\$3,414	31.7%	\$47,227,940,856	8,937	51.1%	42.6%
2017	52,525	36.9%	\$3,478	34.2%	\$49,499,494,032	9,263	56.6%	41.8%
2018	53,334	39.0%	\$3,556	37.2%	\$50,754,340,223	9,425	59.4%	42.0%
2019	54,122	41.1%	\$3,584	38.3%	\$52,435,381,781	9,681	63.7%	42.1%
2020	57,091	48.8%	\$3,781	45.9%	\$53,692,440,166	9,799	65.7%	44.0%
2021	57,641	50.3%	\$3,964	52.9%	\$56,890,359,635	10,616	79.5%	42.2%
2022	58,887	53.5%	\$4,033	55.6%	\$57,550,021,970	10,652	80.1%	42.8%
2023	60,716	58.3%	\$4,102	58.3%	\$57,637,758,690	10,445	76.6%	44.4%
2024	62,463	62.8%	\$4,220	62.8%	\$61,146,848,872	11,055	86.9%	42.8%
Teacher salary if average teacher salary per pupil had kept up with increases in operating expenditures per pupil								\$71,700
Difference (amount by which teacher salaries have fallen behind due to insufficient dedication of revenues to salary increases)								\$9,237
Source, Texas Education Agency								
<sup>1</sup> Average teacher base salary	<sup>2</sup> Actual data for previous year							



Percentage Increase in Operating Expenditures without ESSER vs. Teacher Salaries



### Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)

The state should not rely on the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program as the vehicle for salaries but must ensure that all salaries are raised to competitive levels. Under SB 26, the enhanced TIA program relies on performance pay for pay increases for teachers. Data shows that fewer people are willing to make the choice to be in a profession that puts them at a financial disadvantage.<sup>iii</sup> Incentive pay is simply not a substitute for overall compensation increases. If the goal is to attract and retain teachers, prospective employees need assurances, not “chances.”

The local optional designation system under TIA already leaves out many deserving Texas teachers, it may not be clear on specific criteria used to designate highly effective teachers, it includes unfair hurdles such as student growth measures, and the funding is not required to go directly to the designated teacher. Rather, the funding goes to the teacher’s school district, on condition that the district must use 90% of the funds for teacher compensation on the campus where the designated teacher works. Teachers have raised concerns about TIA, including:

- A plan doesn't make available designation opportunities to all teachers in the district.
- Designations are provided on an inequitable basis.
- Too many external factors impact a teacher’s effectiveness such as class sizes, collaborative planning opportunity, students’ prior knowledge and effort, and parental cooperation and engagement.
- Observations are subjective.
- Basing teacher incentives on student test performance is not an appropriate indication of teacher performance.
- Allocation of funds is inadequate, and teachers may receive much less than they should have earned.
- It can create negative feelings and morale.



The local optional designation system continues to leave out teachers either because their district is not participating or their district's plan is limited. While districts can use measures of student academic growth other than student test scores and can design systems that allow non-core academic teachers to qualify for a designation, many do not do so. This leaves teachers of subjects that do not have standardized test data available ineligible for designation and the extra pay, leaving educators in important subjects such as special education, career and technology, and fine arts without the opportunity to receive a designation and any associated extra pay. **To ensure TIA is a more effective and fair opportunity for a bonus, the state should require participating districts to make all teachers eligible for their Local Optional Teacher Designation System, reduce burdensome subjective evaluations, and provide transparency.**

**Lawmakers should also consider elevating the designation level for a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT).** The National Board Certification program provides the greatest transparency, including expectations and requirements. Studies consistently show that students taught by NBCTs perform better academically, with significant gains observed in test scores and learning outcomes, especially for disadvantaged student populations. The rigorous process of attaining National Board Certification encourages teachers to deeply reflect on their teaching methods and develop more effective strategies, leading to better classroom instruction. NBCTs are often seen as leaders in the education community, mentoring colleagues and contributing to school improvement initiatives. Schools with a higher percentage of NBCTs may experience greater teacher retention due to the recognition and professional validation associated with the certification.

To conclude, education in Texas is at a critical juncture with a widespread teacher shortage, COVID learning losses, and threats to school safety. Texas educators have more on their plate than ever before. We continue to look forward to working with the Legislature to invest in and strengthen our existing public schools. Providing increased funding for schools, raising teacher salaries and strengthening benefits, improving working conditions, and strengthening safety will ensure that Texas students receive the best education possible from high-quality, experienced, and certified teachers at schools that are the pride of their communities.



Endnote

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<sup>i</sup> Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B. (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b4ab/6eaa2ac83f4721044e5de193e3e2dec07ac0.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Encouraging More High School Students to Consider Teaching By: Michelle Croft, Gretchen Guffy, and Dan Vitale, June 2018, <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/pdfs/Encouraging-More-HS-Students-to-Consider-Teaching.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Texas Education Agency. (March 10, 2022). *TEA establishes Teacher Vacancy Task Force to address ongoing staffing challenges in public education*. <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/news-releases/news-2022/tea-establishes-teacher-vacancy-task-force-to-address-ongoing-staffing-challenges-in-public-education>



APPENDIX

Language to ensure: 1) districts do not supplant funds with the funds made available by the new salary increase, and 2) the salary is not only provided directly but on an ongoing basis

A school district shall use the allotment received under Subsection (a) to increase the salary provided to each classroom teacher in the district for the 2025-2026 school year over the annual salary the teacher would have received for the 2025-2026 school year under the district's salary schedule, including the district's hiring schedule, for the 2024-2025 school year, if that schedule had been in effect for the 2025-2026 school year, including any local supplement the employee would have received in the 2025-2026 school year by the amount of the allotment received per teacher."

A teacher employed by a school district in the 2025-2026 school year is, as long as the teacher is employed by the same district, entitled to a salary that is at least equal to the salary the employee received for the 2025-2026 school year."