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ATPE Applauds State Leadership's Federal Relief Announcement

Educators believe getting these federal relief funds to school districts a vital step in recovery from COVID-19 impacts.

AUSTIN, Texas—The [Association of Texas Professional Educators](http://atpe.org) (ATPE)—the largest educators' association in Texas—commends Governor **Greg Abbott**, Lt. Governor **Dan Patrick**, and Speaker **Dade Phelan** for their April 28 announcement regarding the imminent release of \$11.2 billion in federal funds to Texas public schools from the [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief](#) (ESSER III) Fund.

In response to the news, ATPE Executive Director **Shannon Holmes** shared the following statement:

“Texas school districts have been forced to absorb many unanticipated costs over the past year in their battle to safely provide our children with the education they deserve amid a public health crisis.

As an association representing 100,000 Texas educators, we've witnessed firsthand how difficult this year has been for schools across our great state. ATPE is grateful avenues now exist for school districts to receive access to some of the \$11.2 billion that Congress had earlier this year earmarked for them through the ESSER III coronavirus relief funding.

We are very pleased with state officials' assurance today that federal funds will supplement, not supplant, the funding outlined in the state budget bill currently being negotiated in the Texas House and Senate.

ATPE has been lobbying for swift release of the federal funds at the state level. It is heartening to know school districts will be able to apply for these funds via grants as early as Thursday, April 29.

ATPE has also asked the federal government to provide additional guidance on funds that have not yet been distributed because of lingering questions about the eligibility criteria. School districts need to know they can confidently apply for grant funding without fear of being asked to refund the money later.

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As we await further guidance at the federal level, ATPE urges the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to be transparent about the status of all the ESSER funds and the progress they are making toward releasing additional money to our schools. It is of vital importance that lawmakers take every action while the Legislature is in session to draw down the full amount of available funding set aside by Congress.

Finally, we believe it is important to emphasize the importance of local control in school districts' decisions about how to spend relief dollars to meet the unique needs of students and educators in their communities.

We appreciate the flexibility offered by the federal guidelines for these funds, and we hope the state will continue efforts to give our school districts as much help as possible to recoup unforeseen costs and address students' ongoing needs during this difficult time."

For more information or to contact ATPE for comment, contact pr@atpe.org.

[Read ATPE's priorities for the 87th Texas Legislature.](#)

[Read the Governor's announcement press release.](#)

[Read the TEA press release regarding release of ESSER funds.](#)

About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

Founded in 1980, ATPE is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, and future, retired, and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for Texas' five million public school students. | atpe.org