



Input regarding Senate Bill 26

Regarding educator compensation

February 20, 2025

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** appreciates the committee's interest in increasing teacher compensation as a tool to improve recruitment and retention and recognize the professionalism of Texas educators. ATPE offers the following input regarding Senate Bill (SB) 26.

The ATPE Legislative Program adopted annually by the educator-members serving in our association's House of Delegates states that ATPE supports:

- Improving educator compensation as a tool for recruitment and retention.
- A career compensation and benefits package for all certified, licensed, and contracted public school employees that mandates competitive salaries that are equal to or greater than the national average and competitive with private industry.
- A state minimum salary schedule that provides for regular increases over the entirety of an educator's career to recognize longevity in the profession.

Taken together, these positions call for permanent, dedicated funding that provides all teachers a meaningful increase in their base compensation, enables regular increases based on longevity, and is not subject to biennial reappropriation.

Although we applaud the committee for seeking to raise pay in smaller school districts that may have difficulty competing for educator talent, we are concerned the amount of additional compensation offered to most educators under SB 26 may be insufficient to solve the recruitment and retention challenges facing districts statewide. We are also significantly troubled by the bill's removal of important protections under Texas Education Code §48.051 that ensure a minimum percentage of future school funding increases will go toward teacher compensation.

ATPE believes raising the state's minimum salary schedule (MSS) would accomplish the committee's goal in a more efficient manner. The MSS sets a floor for teacher compensation across the state. Most school districts pay salaries above this floor, but the majority of districts that pay at or near the state minimum are small and rural. Significantly increasing the MSS would have the greatest impact on those smaller districts while telegraphing to other districts an imperative to raise their salaries, too. ATPE would be happy to work with the committee to develop a framework for implementation and funding.

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 80,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for more than 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.

ATPE supports the use of differentiated pay for educators who undertake advanced training or certification, advanced coursework or degrees, or other professional duties that they are required to perform outside normal instructional activities. However, we are concerned that SB 26 hinges on optional district participation in Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) programs, which exclude many educators and rely heavily on student test scores. We are particularly concerned by the “enhanced” TIA schools contemplated in SB 26, which would further tie this incentive funding to test-based student performance metrics, going so far as to prohibit local decisions to provide across-the-board raises except under one circumstance. ATPE members oppose overreliance on testing and student performance metrics in these circumstances. Regarding performance-based decisions, the member-written ATPE Legislative Program states:

ATPE believes students’ state-level standardized test scores should not be a component of teacher evaluations until such time as they can be validated through a consensus of independent research and peer review for that purpose.

ATPE supports incorporating measures of student growth at the campus level or higher into evaluations of educators if the measures are developed with educator input, piloted, or deemed statistically reliable.

ATPE supports the creation of a statewide set of evaluation standards for campus administrators that includes a survey of campus classroom educators and staff regarding the professional performance of the campus administrators.

ATPE opposes:

- The use of student performance, including test scores, as the primary measure of a teacher’s effectiveness, as the determining factor for a teacher’s compensation, or as the primary rationale for an adverse employment action.
- The use of value-added measurement at the individual teacher level for teacher evaluation purposes or decisions about continued employment of teachers.
- Incentive or performance pay programs unless they are designed in an equitable and fair manner as determined by educators on a campus basis.

Finally, the text of SB 26 was made available to the public less than 48 hours before the scheduled hearing, leaving educators and members of the public with little time to analyze and respond to the bill in a constructive manner. One of ATPE’s primary goals is to inform our members—and the educator community at large—of legislation critical to their profession and the education of their students and to relay their feedback back to lawmakers. Educators deserve adequate time to engage in meaningful collaboration to ensure that any legislation aimed at supporting them and their colleagues is well constructed and receives the appropriate buy-in from those it is intended to assist.

ATPE appreciates the work of the committee staff and supports the aim of finding efficient ways to improve recruitment and retention. We look forward to working together to improve public education for all 5.5 million-plus Texas public school students. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.

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