



## Input on SB 568

Regarding special education in public schools

March 11, 2025

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following input on **SB 568**:

We want to acknowledge and thank Sen. Bettencourt for the substantial work on special education. As an organization dedicated to advocating for the needs of educators and students, we believe this legislation represents a critical step in ensuring equitable funding and support for students receiving special education services in Texas public schools.

We appreciate that SB 568 builds upon the work of the Texas Commission on Special Education Funding by shifting to a service intensity-based model, ensuring that funding more accurately reflects the needs of individual students. We hope that this bill, through implementation of tiered support levels and service group funding categories, will provide a more equitable and sustainable approach to special education funding. Additionally, embedding cost offsets for full and individual initial evaluations (FIEs) will ease financial burdens on districts, ensuring timely evaluations for students who require services. We would respectfully ask that more than \$250 is appropriated for each FIE considering that most cost more than \$1,000 per student.

The bill's investment in teacher recruitment and retention through grant programs for special education staff is particularly critical. Texas faces a growing shortage of qualified special education professionals, and increased funding to support teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers will help address this gap, ensuring that students receive high-quality instruction and support.

Furthermore, the increase in special education transportation reimbursement rates and funding for education service centers to establish day program placements will enhance access to necessary resources, particularly in underserved areas. Doubling the college, career, or military readiness outcomes bonus for students receiving special education services is a step in the right direction. We appreciate that SB 568 recognizes the importance of post-secondary success for all students.

While we recognize that additional steps may be needed to further support educators—including salary stipends and funding for certification exams—we commend this bill as an advancement in providing much-needed resources and structural improvements to special education funding.

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

Again, though, while we appreciate the intent of SB 568, we are concerned its proposed implementation timeline does not provide sufficient time for school districts, educators, and stakeholders to transition effectively to the new funding structure. A rushed transition could create gaps in services, disrupt student support systems, and place additional strain on already limited special education resources. We urge legislators to collaborate closely with stakeholders—including educators, administrators, and parents—to ensure that the transition is implemented in a way that minimizes disruption and provides adequate time for training, funding adjustments, and service continuity. Additionally, we are concerned that the appropriations for special education services, continue be too low to cover the true costs incurred by school districts and do not significantly close the current gap between funding and the cost of services provided. Furthermore, many students who require special education services do not have the appropriate label due to parental concerns or reluctance to formally identify their child, which may prevent critical funding from reaching the students who need it most. Addressing these challenges through a more thoughtful, stakeholder-driven process will be essential to ensuring this legislation meets the needs of all students with disabilities in Texas.

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