



## Joint Opposition to HB 2554

April 6, 2021

The Honorable Harold Dutton  
Chair, House Committee on Public Education

Dear Chairman Dutton:

The four statewide teacher membership organizations respectfully oppose House Bill (HB) 2554 by Rep. Gary Gates and appreciate this opportunity to provide our input on the bill.

HB 2554 proposes the creation of “Joint Vocational School Districts” (JVSDs) to serve high school students “whose educational needs are better served by focused vocational education and training.” Two or more districts would petition the State Board of Education (SBOE) to create the JVSD, which would then be eligible for state funding. Due to numerous provisions aimed at separating vocational education from the merits of a holistic, well-rounded public education, the bill would ultimately harm the integrity of the public education system in Texas and its ability to serve all students equitably.

Many provisions in HB 2554 would negatively affect the equitable treatment of students. Under the bill, it is unclear what measures are being used to determine whether a student is “better served” through the proposed program. It is clear, however, that vocational training programs have been historically used to segregate and track students into often-stagnant career paths that may offer little to no upward mobility. The proposed special school district would further separate students into an environment devoid of the core aspects of a public school setting, such as the opportunity to benefit from mental health professionals, access to special education and language services, and access to extracurricular activities.

HB 2554 would allow students in a JVSD to be taught by uncertified educators, further harming the students’ educational environment. Teachers are most effective when they have gone through a rigorous preparation program and understand curriculum, pedagogical practices, and classroom management techniques. Additionally, the bill specifies that Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 37.002 regarding the removal of a student by a teacher to maintain discipline in the classroom does not apply unless the board of trustees of a JVSD determine it is applicable. The maintenance of discipline in a classroom, especially in the case of career and technical coursework that often includes expensive and potentially dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, is essential. HB 2554 does not ensure efficacy and safety in the educational environment.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this input on HB 3731 and look forward to working with the committee on improvements to the accountability system.

Respectfully,

**Association of Texas Professional Educator**  
**Texas American Federation of Teachers**

**Texas State Teachers Association**  
**Texas Classroom Teachers Association**

CC: Members of the House Committee on Public Education