



ATPE Input on HB 3643

Regarding the creation of the
Texas Commission on Virtual Education

March 30, 2021

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** appreciates this opportunity to express our support for House Bill (HB) 3643 by Rep. Ken King.

HB 3643 would establish the Texas Commission on Virtual Education, a 13-member body that would develop and make recommendations on the delivery of virtual education in the public school system and on state funding for virtual education under the Foundation School Program.

Because of the low performance of existing virtual schools in Texas, ATPE appreciates efforts to carefully study the appropriateness and most effective methods of virtual learning before expanding any virtual offerings to public school students. The legislature is entrusted with ensuring the efficiency of public schooling in Texas and should therefore meticulously consider drastic changes to the educational system that could harm students, especially given the poor outcomes of full-time virtual schools and the lack of equitable learning for students in virtual settings during the pandemic.

ATPE supports HB 3643 and offers two suggestions to help strengthen its ability to provide meaningful recommendations. The commission is charged with developing and making recommendations on the delivery of virtual education, which is specifically within the purview and expertise of educators. As originally filed, the bill only requires the commission to include one educator, either retired or current, as appointed by the Governor. ATPE suggests altering the commission membership to include additional educators and to ensure that the appointments made by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House include representation from both the elementary and secondary school levels. Due to the way children develop, virtual education should look much different for younger students versus older students, and it is important to have this pedagogical perspective on the commission.

We appreciate the opportunity to support HB 3643 and to provide feedback as it moves through the legislative process. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.

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 more than 100,000 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 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.