



Input on SB 2253

Relating to educator preparation and certification, and certain allotments under the Foundation School Program

April 1, 2025

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) offers the following input on Senate Bill (SB) 2253 by Chairman Brandon Creighton:

ATPE appreciates that SB 2253 is a wide-ranging proposal that aims to address persistent challenges in teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention across Texas.

As a statewide, bipartisan teacher organization, we welcome the comprehensive and research-informed approach this bill takes. Texas needs bold, sustained investments in its educator workforce, and SB 2253 moves us in the right direction by expanding access to teacher residencies, mentorship programs, and grow-your-own pipelines—while also seeking to reform certification and compensation systems.

Texas faces a critical shortage of fully certified, well-prepared teachers. With many educators leaving the profession annually, and a growing number entering through alternative certification, it's more important than ever to invest in quality preparation and structured support.

We strongly support SB 2253's provisions to:

- Expand high quality preservice engagement within K-12 classroom settings for teacher candidates;
- Establish new preservice pathways for traditional, alternative, and grow-your-own certification candidates;
- Provide stipends for mentor and cooperating teachers;
- Create targeted salary supplements for early-career educators entering high-need subject areas; and
- Provide accountability and continuous improvement mechanisms for Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

These reforms are vital to ensure all Texas students—especially those in high-need and rural areas—are taught by well-prepared, professionally supported teachers.

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.

We support the bill's intent to require full certification for classroom teachers in foundation curriculum areas and prohibit school districts from exempting themselves from certification requirements through District of Innovation (DOI) plans. Ensuring that all students have access to certified educators is a matter of educational equity and professional integrity. We also support stronger parent notification requirements when uncertified teachers are placed in classrooms for extended periods. We would request including fine arts in the foundation curriculum list in order to prevent the unintended consequence of having the certified educators teaching these courses being reassigned to cover the current foundation curriculum courses and shifting uncertified teachers into teaching fine arts. This is of particular concern at the elementary level where most educators hold an EC-6 generalist certificate.

SB 2253 increases the Texas Education Agency's oversight of EPPs and district partnership programs, which is reasonable. However, we strongly caution against growing agency bureaucracy in the process. Implementation of this bill should not require the addition of new TEA staff. The agency should leverage its existing infrastructure, work with regional Education Service Centers, and collaborate with EPPs to deliver technical support without diverting additional public funds away from schools and classrooms.

The bill's Partnership Allotment (Section 48.157) and mentorship programs are important tools for expanding access to high-quality preparation in rural and high-need areas. The use of a high-needs and rural factor in funding formulas is especially critical and will help ensure that smaller districts are not left behind. ATPE appreciates the inclusion of "grow your own" models that allow paraprofessionals and other school employees to pursue certification while continuing to serve their communities.

SB 2253 also addresses the structure of teacher compensation and career pathways. While ATPE supports differentiated pay opportunities, we do so with important caveats:

We support the expansion of local designation systems as long as they are optional and designed with meaningful educator input. These systems can be effective tools for increasing teacher salaries and recognizing instructional leadership.

We support teacher designations (master, exemplary, recognized, and acknowledged) that reward skill, experience, and impact, and we appreciate the inclusion of National Board Certification as a recognized standard under the designation system.

We strongly support time studies to better understand and reduce the growing burden of non-instructional duties, which are a key driver of teacher burnout and attrition.

Though we support equitable, differentiated compensation structures as a supplement to an educator's base salary, we must be clear on certain prerequisites:

- Base pay must be adequate for all teachers. Incentives should not replace or delay across-the-board raises.

- Standardized test scores should not be used as a primary factor in teacher evaluation or compensation.
- We oppose the use of value-added models (VAM) at the individual teacher level. These models are unstable, statistically unreliable, and often punitive.
- Incentive systems must be developed with educator input, ensure equity across districts, and focus on collaboration, not competition.

Any compensation reform must be grounded in fairness, transparency, and a commitment to improving working conditions across the profession—not just for a select few.

SB 2253 centers early-career educators, which we support, but there remains a pressing need to invest in veteran teachers. Long-term educators play a critical role in mentoring, curriculum leadership, and school culture. Future efforts must include:

- Retention bonuses for experienced teachers,
- Opportunities for career advancement without leaving the classroom, and
- Structures to elevate and recognize professional expertise.

SB 2253 reflects a thoughtful, ambitious approach to improving Texas' teacher workforce. By strengthening preparation, creating meaningful support structures, and offering incentives for those entering and staying in the profession, the bill lays a strong foundation for long-term progress. Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Texas educators and students. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.