



Input on CSHB 2

Regarding public education and public school finance

May 15, 2025

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following comments on the Senate's committee substitute to House Bill (HB) 2. They are drawn from the experience and feedback of our members, who work to educate children in public schools across the great state of Texas. While we recognize and appreciate efforts to respond to long-standing concerns in public education, we also have significant concerns with the current approach and respectfully offer the following input:

There are meaningful provisions in this bill that reflect the concerns of the education community. Most notably, we support the proposal to phase out blanket waivers that have allowed districts to hire uncertified teachers for foundation subjects. Ensuring all Texas students are taught by certified educators is a vital step toward strengthening instructional quality.

We are also encouraged by the proposed transition to a service intensity model for special education funding in the second year of the biennium, which more accurately aligns resources with student needs. We greatly appreciate the inclusion of \$1,000 in funding per full and individual initial evaluation (FIIE). Although some might feel this is a huge amount, we would note that it is still less and sometimes considerably less than the actual cost districts incur, which is often over \$1,000 per evaluation.

The bill's proposed across-the-board pay raises for teachers with at least three years of experience (\$5,000 to \$10,000 in smaller districts and \$2,500 to \$5,500 in larger districts) are an important acknowledgment of the role appropriate compensation plays in retaining experienced educators. The amount of these raises is significant, represents real progress, and should be maintained and expanded upon in future sessions.

Unfortunately, CSHB 2 also reflects a pattern of selective support that even the teachers set to receive the highest tier of funding have made clear does not align with the inherently collaborative nature of the education workforce. Although we applaud the investment in some educators, this plan excludes many critical staff (paraprofessionals, counselors, librarians, diagnosticians, custodians, and other support personnel) who contribute daily and without whom student success and campus safety would not be possible. These omissions undermine morale and the collaborative spirit that defines effective school communities.

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.

Equally concerning is the bill's failure to meaningfully increase discretionary funding, such as the Basic Allotment. Without a significant per-student funding increase, many school districts will continue to face budget shortfalls that force them to reduce staff, close campuses, and cut programs. The reality is that even if some teachers receive raises, districts unable to balance their budgets may still need to lay off educators, including teachers, and scale back instructional support. CSHB 2, as written, does little to remedy the broader financial stressors facing public schools.

Also deeply troubling from the standpoint of divisiveness are provisions (from Senate Bill (SB) 26) that appear designed to take a swipe at educator organizations and mute educator advocacy. The inclusion of a state-sponsored liability insurance program managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) raises serious questions. It establishes a new state bureaucracy for a service that is already provided effectively by ATPE and similar professional organizations. Let us be clear: ATPE is not a union. We are the largest professional educator association in Texas. As an independent, Texas-only organization, ATPE offers not only professional liability insurance but also individualized legal representation and a trusted support system for educators facing professional challenges. This support system extends beyond legal benefits.

It is difficult to view this provision as anything other than an attempt to undercut independent educator associations, whose members have spoken out in large numbers on education policy this session. Just as with efforts to eliminate payroll deduction for association dues, this proposal seems intended to silence the voices of those educators who advocate on behalf of students and public schools. Moreover, the proposal creates an obvious conflict of interest. We must ask: Should the same agency responsible for certifying and disciplining educators also be in charge of managing an educator's legal defense in the face of such sanctions?

Texas public schools have not received a funding increase from the state since 2019, and districts are reaching a breaking point. While there are commendable aspects of CSHB 2 (particularly in increasing compensation for some teachers and special education funding), its current form falls short of meeting the urgent needs of our schools. We urge the Senate to restore the House-passed provisions of HB 2 that increase the Basic Allotment and extend pay raises to *all* school staff. We also ask that the Senate reject measures that undermine professional associations such as ATPE and instead focus on uniting, not dividing, the educators who serve our students every day.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to public education. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.

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