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May 9, 2019

**Dear Members of the Texas Legislature,**

We are grateful for the hard work legislators have put into improving the school finance system this session. An increased investment in our students is greatly needed, as is addressing the state's over-reliance on local school district property taxes. We also thank both chambers for supporting full-day pre-Kindergarten and changing the school finance formulas to ensure additional funding goes to the students who need it most.

**We ask that, as you develop the final school finance plan, you pay specific attention to the following concerns:**

1. **School districts need flexible funding** in addition to a teacher pay raise. Local school trustees are best able to determine the needs of their communities.
2. **Moving to current year values** eliminates the one-year safeguard that fast-growing school districts need to accommodate erratic enrollment fluctuations. It also prevents districts from having the time to adequately determine their revenue and prepare budgets for the upcoming year.

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3. **The 2.5 percent limit on local school district tax collections** puts the state's future budgets at risk and creates inequities in tax rates. This open-ended commitment will bind future legislatures and potentially force cuts in education and other state programs. The cost will accumulate each year and become unsustainable over time.
4. **Test-based funding** has no basis in research, creates a dangerous culture of winners and losers, and further exacerbates the overemphasis on high-stakes testing. Third-graders should not have to feel the pressure of determining a school district's budget.
5. **Adding more high-stakes writing assessments** will divert attention from other classroom needs. We should focus on effective and meaningful assessments that support productive classroom instruction.
6. **School start date restrictions** prevent Districts of Innovation from providing their students the same opportunity to prepare before the STAAR tests as charter school students. The same flexibility should apply to all public schools.

Please work to ensure school finance legislation addresses these concerns. Our public schools are vital to Texas' future.