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Honorable Dan Huberty, Chairman
House Public Education Committee
Room E2.408
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairman Huberty:

We are writing in regard to the scheduled meeting for the House of Representatives Public Education Committee on Wednesday, August 8 at 9:00 a.m. that includes the following bullet point for discussion:

- *Review current state mechanisms for identifying and rewarding educators through state-level strategies. Examine how providing additional funding to enhance compensation in districts facing a shortage of experienced, highly rated teachers would affect retention and teacher quality, in addition to whether it would encourage teachers to provide additional services through extracurricular activities, tutoring, and mentoring.*

The Officers and Regional Directors of the Texas Association of Rural Schools (TARS) met August 4, 2018 to identify the areas of concern we have for the upcoming Legislative Session. One of the main topics that was identified was the possible compensation plan as stated above on your August 8 agenda. The concern is as follows:

- I. Considerations for compensation plan review:
 - A. We feel this needs to be a local decision, not a decision driven by the State of Texas unless the minimum teacher pay scale is increased and funded.
 1. Please allow local Boards of Education determine how to compensate and reward Teachers for extra work and assignments.
 - B. Please do not let the State give seed money for one year and then the plan reverts to the school districts as an unfunded mandate in the future.
 - C. Officers and Directors felt our schools would be better served if the State increased the State Minimum Salary Schedule to recruit more young people into education and funded that increase.

- D. Teacher benefits was the number one concern of our board of directors. Insurance costs should be improved and the Teacher Retirement System should be protected.
- E. Improve the status of the teaching profession to recruit college students to pursue education as a career.
- F. Please know when an attempt to award teachers for exceeding expectations like was made through the old Career Ladder lead teachers to compete at the expense of each other instead of collaborating with one another other for the best interest of the students.
- G. Is there a funding mechanism that could flow dollars to school districts much like the High School Allotment (with specific spending requirements that could be used to compensate teachers solely for working past the 8-hour day)? In the rural school districts, the numbers of staff are low thus small numbers of staff must work multiple extra-curricular duties and perform afterschool tutoring because there are simply not enough people to perform all the duties.(refer to letter C).

Generally, most school districts provide small stipends for sponsoring extra-curricular activities. This can also be said for those who are identified as lead teachers or those put into a place of mentorship for colleague teachers.

The main problem we face in Rural School Districts is the recruitment of quality teachers. Rural schools cannot compete with the estimated \$47,000 beginning teacher pay of the metropolitan area. Colleges and universities are experiencing a decline in the number of students who are enrolling in the Field of Education. It is important to note the large amount of money school districts must commit to training staff as new teachers enter the profession; their training does not end when the student graduates from their teacher education program. There are simply not enough teachers to fill all the positions that need filled statewide and especially in Rural Texas. Many school districts have consolidated services and found ways to deliver classes such as foreign language through cooperative efforts. The anticipated teacher shortage has arrived. Elementary teachers have in the past been plentiful, but now there are not enough candidates for elementary positions. The reasons are many, but include a low Minimum Pay Scale for a job that has much more pressure today than in years past.

As always, we appreciate your support for our Rural School Districts and will certainly be available to answer questions or give input.

Sincerely,

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