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Written Testimony from Christy Rome, Executive Director

For the Texas Senate Committee on Finance Regarding Inflation  
May 4, 2022

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Chairwoman Huffman and Members of the Committee:

Both taxpayers and school districts are feeling the effects of higher inflation, and as you look at this issue, we ask that you consider the ever-increasing costs that schools are facing from both inflation and the labor market. For example, school buses must run the same routes and travel the same miles to transport students regardless of the cost of diesel fuel (which continues to remain high). And fuel is just one metric.

Schools want and need to be able to continue to invest in their educators — and those educators are facing higher costs for food and housing. Fortunately, educators who own their homes will benefit personally from property-tax relief, and that's a positive. In other words, not only does inflation drive up costs for school districts and leave fewer resources to invest in educators, but those educators are also facing inflationary pressures in their own lives. It's critical that schools can attract and retain a highly qualified teaching workforce.

The benefits of House Bill 3 (86-R) have been completely consumed by the cost of inflation in many school districts throughout the state. That legislation delivered a minimum of a 3 percent increase in funding to the majority of districts in 2019. Since that time, inflation has increased by 9 percent on some metrics, and 11 percent on others. Higher operating costs are a major concern for the districts doing the critical work of educating our children.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue, and in particular its impact on our state's public schools.