

## **Educators praise bipartisan coalition for steadfastly supporting public schools**

(AUSTIN) — Teachers, parents, administrators, school board trustees and others supporting public education expressed gratitude Monday to the bipartisan coalition in the Texas House who stood strong against Education Savings Account (ESA) vouchers for private schools throughout this year’s legislative session.

Educators also urged legislators to consider ESA vouchers separate from school funding in future special sessions. Efforts by the Texas Senate over the past week to link unpopular ESA vouchers to an increase and the Basic Allotment, as well as other changes to school finance formulas, sunk efforts to put billions more into Texas classrooms and provide state funding for teacher pay raises.

“The improper linkage between funding for public schools and private school vouchers cost our schools billions of dollars that should have gone to teacher salaries and other classroom needs,” said Christy Rome, Executive Director of the Texas School Coalition, which represents school districts that pay recapture to the state. “The Texas Senate tried to present a false choice: Private-school vouchers, or nothing for our public schools. But we do not accept this false choice, and fortunately, neither did the Texas House.”

After the Senate attached ESA vouchers to the House Bill 100 school finance legislation, the House and Senate could not reach final agreement on the bill. Throughout the year, a coalition of Republicans and Democrats have opposed ESA vouchers, which would send taxpayer dollars to private and home schools with no accountability for whether their students succeed or whether they manage taxpayer resources properly.

“The people of Texas owe tremendous thanks to the members of both parties who stood up and protected our public schools,” said Dr. Kevin Brown, Executive Director of the Texas Association of School Administrators. “Without their courage, supporters of private-school vouchers would have already begun to dismantle the public schools that serve every community and welcome all students.”

The Basic Allotment is the state’s main unit of funding for public schools. Inflation over the past few years has been 14.5 percent, and it would take a \$900 increase in the Basic Allotment to keep up with inflation. Instead, the House approved a \$140 increase and the Senate approved a \$50 increase. Ultimately, due to the Senate’s effort to tie vouchers to school funding, no increase in the Basic Allotment was approved.

“Schools are already preparing for the adoptions of their budgets—for about 25% of schools,

those budgets are adopted in June,” Dr. Brown said. “We are asking schools to adopt budgets during a time of great uncertainty as to what their funding will be, and it didn’t have to be this way.”

Nancy Humphrey, President of the Plano ISD Board of Trustees, said legislators should consider public school funding and ESA vouchers separately, rather than in the same legislation, during a special session.

“We urge legislators to concentrate on helping schools strengthen their teaching workforce and catching up with the 14.5 percent inflation experienced over the past three years,” Humphrey said. “We urge them to make robust and meaningful increases to the Basic Allotment, which has not been increased since 2019. If they are determined to consider harmful ESA vouchers for private schools, let those proposals stand on their own merits.”

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