

Dear TAMS Members:

It is imperative that you contact your legislators immediately to let them know that we do NOT support CS HB 1. A Coalition Committee comprised of officers/executive directors of the educational organizations (TARS, Equity Center, Mid-Sized Schools, TACS, TASA, TASB, Texas School Alliance, Fast Growth Assoc., South Texas Assoc., Texas School Alliance) has been meeting regularly for the past several months in order to prepare for this special session. We developed a set of principles that addressed the concerns of all districts throughout Texas. That document is available on the TASA website. The major issues are: Adequacy, Equity, Capacity, Local Enrichment, Facilities, Vouchers.

As the Executive Director of TARS, Bill Grusendorf, stated, "Last week and this have been weeks of stop and go, hurry up and wait, one step forward and two steps back, and every other frustration you can think of!" Things are happening very quickly, most of which have been behind close doors. The special session was called to do three things: lower property taxes, reduce recapture and put more money in the public school system. CS HB 1 does lower taxes by \$5 billion and increases funding for schools by \$700 million - UNACCEPTABLE!

First and foremost for Mid-Size Schools, our formula is once again in jeopardy. CS HB 1 replaces our adjustment with a new index "involving the natural log of ADA, the square of the natural log, and the cube of the natural log!" The bill does have a "hold-harmless" with no guarantee in terms of length of time and it does not appear to "run through" Tier II.

The members of the Coalition have unanimously agreed that CS HB 1 does lower property taxes, does reduce recapture, but does not address the crisis of education - "our Guiding Principles"! We met with Chairman Grusendorf and Chairman Heflin this afternoon. They were seeking our support of the bill - IF we want any additional money. The Chairman is touting \$1.5 billion new dollars; however, those dollars include the present \$110 per WADA we received this year (to be continued), incentives for teachers, health insurance flow-thru. The bill also requires maintenance of effort on compensatory education, bilingual/esl, as well as special education, stating just a few of the radical changes of the 372 page bill.

Please ask your Representative and Senator to solve this crisis in school finance by uphold our core principles.

The following are talking points that I would encourage you to share with the Legislature:

1. The funding level of CS HB 1 falls far short of the necessary investment to meet the demands of our public schools.
2. The bill provides \$5 billion in tax relief and only \$700 for public

education.

3. The constitutional provisions ensures that public education funding will regress over time.

4. The adequacy standard is not specifically defined and the methodology has not been disclosed. We must strive for exemplary, not 55% passage rate.

5. This distribution model will have more than two thirds of Texas schools districts under hold-harmless provisions, with only a minimum 2% increase established in the bill.

6. The formulas in this bill provide less than what school districts are spending now.

7. Appraisal caps are set too low.

8. Appraisal caps in other states have devastated public education funding and local government services.

9. The uniform local property tax is a statewide property tax.

10. It reduces local discretion over tax rates from 64 cents to 10 cents and caps that in the Texas Constitution.

We have been told that the Representatives are not hearing from their superintendents! PLEASE CALL IMMEDIATELY!

Thank you,

Mary Ann Whiteker
President - TAMS