

Gloria McClanahan

SB 708 by Senator Shapleigh, related to technology allotment

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Testifying “on” the bill, with a requested change via amendment or substitute:

My Chairman and members, I am Gloria McClanahan. I'm unable to personally be with you today, but wish to provide this written testimony on SB 708, and encourage the committee to consider an amendment or committee substitute to allocate \$1 or \$2 of the proposed per pupil allotment in support of electronic library databases.

I speak on behalf of myself today, although I am the retired Library Media Services Director for the Texas Education Agency.

When I held that position, I was deeply involved in the implementation of the Texas Library Connection (TLC), which provided digital library resources statewide. It was the most successful and equitable educational technology program established and managed by the TEA. It equitably provided electronic resources – reference content, newspaper articles, periodicals and scholarly journals – to every school district in the state.

At a time when content on the Internet is often inaccurate and inappropriate, the Texas Library Connection provided safe, authoritative content to students and teachers, at school and at home, to support instruction, teaching and learning. I know many of you are familiar with the program and its great success. I understand that in prior testimony, you've heard from several witnesses who have spoken in support of these digital library resources and how today's students tend to find them more engaging than traditional print materials.

What you may not be aware of, however, is that the initial funding for TLC was the result of funding from the technology allotment program. To my recollection, earlier language provided the Commissioner and TEA a “set aside” of funds from the technology allotment amounting to a dollar or two of the per pupil amount, to fund TLC and other worthy statewide initiatives. As a result of that mechanism, the TEA secured volume discounts that dramatically reduced the cost and, equally important, implemented the program equitably.

That the entire state had access to these resources provided strong support of Texas' educational technology initiatives, and would seem to do so even more so today, as your committee moves forward with electronic instructional materials, virtual schools, and this increased tech allotment. My request and recommendation is that you consider adding language to the bill that would dedicate \$1 or \$2 dollars per pupil in support of statewide access to digital library resources, under the administration and oversight of the Texas Education Agency.