



ROCKDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Greetings Committee Members,

I want to address school funding with you. Recently, the Legislative Budget Board reported that public school finance is currently less equitable than when House Bill 1 was passed.

In Rockdale ISD we are looking at a \$1.5 million dollar shortfall if we operate this coming year like we have during our current year. Like everyone else in tough economic times we are asking a reduced number (an 8% cut) of staff to do more. Even with the huge layoffs at the Alcoa plant in our district our student population has remained fairly constant, but as learners in the 21st century their educational needs have increased, operational expenses have increased, and expectations from the legislature have increased.

I believe that unintended consequences have resulted from an intentional action taken in 2006 to reduce inequity in our finance system. Therefore, I am submitting written testimony supporting SB 982, authored by Senator Leticia Van de Putte, which reduces inequity and addresses the following:

- Schools will be funded from within the formula system
- Improves equity by increasing the funding per WADA of those districts with low Target Revenues closer to districts with mid range Target Revenues
- Funds schools based on the wealth level of Austin ISD – equalizing low and mid-wealth Districts up to the equalized wealth level. This is a scaled upgrade with 90% in the first year and 95% in the second year of AISD's wealth level.
- The removal of allocations outside the system and hold harmless provisions
- Schools taxing at \$1.00 or more for M & O are provided the ability to gain funding through equity and not be frozen at funding levels based on values from 4-5 years ago
- Maintenance and operation taxes can be reduced for taxpayers without penalizing state funding for the district
- Allows districts to plan with dependability and confidence for subsequent years

The following is a look at the current Target Revenue per WADA of school districts you may represent or districts that are in your surrounding area:

Dan Patrick and Mario Gallegos

Houston	5102
Cypress Fairbanks	4505
Alief	4688
Channelview	4694
Pasadena	4703
Sheldon	6180

Tommy Williams

Conroe	5103
Splendora	4563
Montgomery	5553
New Caney	4861

Kip Averitt

Waco	4612
Westphalia	3932
Bruceville-Eddy	5398

Royce West

Dallas	5230
De Soto	4675

Wendy Davis

Ft. Worth	4589
Birdville	4588
Northwest	6460

Steve Ogden

College Station	5609
Bryan	4863
Cameron	4531
Rockdale ISD	4714

Leticia Van de Putte

San Antonio	4693
North East	5350

Florence Shapiro

Plano	5416
Princeton	4697
Lovejoy	7170

It is obvious that there is a great deal of disparity in our finance system. There are greater extremes than the few that are listed above, but these are examples that may provide a picture of districts in the area you represent.

Not only is inequity an issue, but the fact we are frozen at 2005-06 levels. Since HB 1 was passed the legislature created additional requirements and added greater accountability to school districts with funding at frozen levels. We continue to move with less. We are nearing a critical point where our district is either going to have to **lay off more personnel, cut programs** out of our current offerings, or ask **taxpayers to pay more M & O taxes** in a district that is currently experiencing over 1100 layoffs from its largest employer.

Either option will result in negative consequences from raising class size ratios, reducing opportunities for students to receive quality accelerated instruction and participating in activities that have a major influence their lives, increasing additional unemployment in a county that is already **over 10% unemployed**, and preventing the establishment of businesses or causing the demise of current businesses as taxes increase.

Thank you for your time and your support of the education of Texans. If I can be of any assistance to you during the session please contact me.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howell Wright", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.