

Austin Independent School District

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Testimony to the Texas Senate Committee on Education

Senate Bill 296 by Senator Jeff Wentworth

Relating to the mitigation of the impact of residential development in public school districts.

March 1, 2011

Good morning Madam Chair, members of the Committee, and Senator Wentworth, my name is Robert Schneider, member of the Austin ISD Board of Trustees. I am here on behalf of my school district to testify in support of Senate Bill 296.

As a trustee in a large school district for nine years, I have come to value the ability for a school district to anticipate and plan for growth. While not every section of our District is experiencing rapid growth, the area of the district that I represent is expanding at a rapid pace, and we are responsible for providing neighborhood schools for these new communities.

In order to effectively and efficiently provide facilities for students, it is critical that school districts be informed of developments for planning purposes. Sometimes we do not learn about a proposed development in time to make all the necessary plans according to a schedule that allows for the best utilization of resources, and sometimes the land necessary to build a school in a certain neighborhood is not available to the district for purchase.

Senate Bill 296 would dramatically improve a district's ability to plan for the new developments that are approved and it would provide us with the ability to purchase the necessary property, at a fair market price, to construct a school that can educate the children in the new neighborhood.

This legislation provides school districts with the ability to better carry out our mission of making quality educational opportunities available in a neighborhood school for all students.