



November 5, 2020

The Honorable Trey Martinez Fischer
4243 Piedras Drive East, #256
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Representative Martinez Fischer,

Northside ISD is grateful for the six-week extension of the hold harmless granted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) that will fully cover funding for Average Daily Attendance for the first semester of the 2020-21 school year. Our Board of Trustees and I respectfully request that you encourage Commissioner Morath and other state leaders to continue the hold harmless for the remainder of this school year.

An extended hold harmless allows our district the stability and security to ensure that we can fulfill the commitments we planned for in our budget to fully serve our students' educational and emotional needs, keep teachers and staff employed, and ensure everyone is safe during this pandemic. A hold harmless for only half of the school year does not preclude the likelihood that both operational and educational cuts will need to be considered to our district's budget. Like many others, our district has already seen a loss in enrollment due to COVID-19 and expects that loss to be compounded by traditionally lower enrollment in the second semester.

Enrollment decline as of November 1 was 2% below where we built our budget, resulting in a potential loss of \$8 million in state funding for our district. Our staff has and continues to diligently reach out to families in an effort to recover students.

The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in a learning loss for our students whose education has been interrupted for the second school year in a row. This requires intensive intervention by our district to address the deficits that are reflected in assessments from the beginning of this school year. Potential reductions in staff and services due to loss of funding will have a direct impact on some of the most vulnerable students in our district and will most definitely have a long-lasting negative effect on their educational attainment. In addition to the strains on district budgets caused by enrollment loss, the hold harmless does not include funding for certain programs implemented in HB 3 (86R) including, importantly, increased weights for compensatory education.

Unfortunately, waiting until the 87th Legislative Session to mitigate some of the damage from loss of funding will be too late for this school year. The current surplus in the Foundation School Program is more than enough to cover hold harmless for the full school year. If hold harmless is not extended for the spring semester, the process of making difficult decisions to reduce staffing, in addition to cutting intervention programs for our students, will begin immediately. Please do not consider our Fund Balance as the answer. That balance has already been impacted by COVID-19 related expenses such as technology, PPE, plexiglass, and other needs totaling more than \$20 million for Northside ISD.

Please support the continuation of the hold harmless for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. Receiving an answer from TEA by December 1, 2020, will allow districts to have explicit conversations with their school boards and communities to either assure them that school budgets are sound, or alert them of the need to begin making decisions about layoffs and reducing operations before the Christmas holidays.

Thank you in advance for your leadership and your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B-T Woods', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Brian T. Woods, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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