



Brian T. Woods, Ed.D.
Superintendent

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Jane Nelson
PO Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chair Nelson,

On behalf of Northside ISD, the largest school district in San Antonio and the 4th largest in Texas, I want to thank you for your service to the State of Texas on the Senate Committee on Finance. As you begin your important work to balance the budget for the next biennium, I want to express my and my board's gratitude for your early commitment to fully fund Texas public schools.

Your committee's work on HB 3 in the 86th Legislative Session was a labor of love for Texas students. The public school finance system was in dire need of repair, and HB 3 brought life to much needed equitable funding, programs for students that have unique educational needs, and recognizing that early learning is key to a successful school career. It is unfortunate that the good intentions of HB 3 were abruptly fractured by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, the pandemic's effects on student learning have been catastrophic. As soon as schools were ordered closed in Spring 2020, districts began to plan for the consequences of that disruption, including how it would impact student attendance in the 2020-21 school year as well as future school years.

At Northside ISD, we planned and executed an aggressive campaign for both virtual learning and safely bringing our students back to campus to minimize the damage done by an interrupted education. Our staff has consistently worked as an all hands on deck team in calling parents, visiting homes, reaching out via alerts and social media, and other methods to find students. We comprehend the full picture of what it means when a child does not show up for class. The affects are not only educational. We are kept up at night by the thought of our students going hungry, the pandemic-related economic burdens they bear with their families, and their overall physical and mental health.

In addition to focusing on the biennium ahead of us, it is also important to recognize the immediate need to hold school districts harmless by fully funding what was appropriated last session. Extending the hold harmless for the spring semester will help districts continue their efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on our students instead of taking time to make difficult decisions around budget cuts.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues that affect all 5.4 million Texas students.

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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Cc: Senator Roland Gutierrez, District 19
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