

MAY 11, 2026

House Committee on Public Education Interim Hearing Written Testimony

Dear Chairman Buckley, Vice-Chair Bernal, and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the Committee's interim charge on the State of Education. We'd like to comment on two components of the charge: school district enrollment trends and best practices to sustain and expand high-performing schools.

DISTRICT AND CAMPUS ENROLLMENT

According to the most recent PEIMS Student Enrollment Report, public school enrollment has dropped by over 76,000 students from SY 2025 to SY 2026.¹ Due to broader economic forces, such as declining birth rates² and migratory pattern changes,³ these trends are likely to continue in the coming years. Considering that the Texas public school system funds districts based on student attendance, rapid enrollment declines can have a significant impact on district budgets and long-term operational planning. Within the last few years, many districts have made difficult decisions regarding school closures, staff lay-offs, program cuts, etc., in order to adjust to this systemic disruption.

In investigating solutions to these issues, we recommend the Committee consider the following actions:

- **Protect public education funding**, sustaining and expanding investments made in recent years, particularly for low-income and minority students.
- **Provide state support to districts**, helping district leaders facing tough budget cycles to engage the local community, monitor and minimize impact to student outcomes (particularly for high-needs students), and evaluate long-term enrollment trends to encourage and/or require advance, multi-year planning.
- **Create more flexibility within the system**, encouraging districts to be more adaptive and innovative in their school design models, staffing decisions, inter- and intra- district enrollment policies, and facility usage.

HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

As the state advances towards its goal of reaching the top five states in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP),⁴ it's imperative the state evaluates and prioritizes investments in school models and programs that are proven to improve student outcomes. In particular, there is strong evidence that low-income and minority students benefit the most from a system that cultivates high expectations and continuously improves.⁵ While the state has made progress in recent years, more attention is needed to expand these programs to support our most struggling students.

To close achievement gaps and adequately prepare students for the workforce, we recommend the Committee consider the following actions:

- **Increase funding for school improvement**, ensuring that the highest-need students receive the most effective resources sooner rather than later.
- **Evaluate best practices for strong board governance and district/campus leadership**, holding top leaders accountable for delivering a high-quality public education.
- **Support whole system transformation**, funding programs from PreK to Postsecondary that are innovative, research-backed, and student-centered.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We look forward to the Committee's research and deliberation in supporting and strengthening Texas's public schools.

¹ 2025-2026 Statewide PEIMS Student Enrollment Report

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention April 2026 Vital Statistics Rapid Release

³ U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2025 National and State Population Estimates

⁴ HB 8, 89th Legislative Session, 2nd Special Called Session

⁵ Dixon, C. (2024, November 19). School Turnaround Strategies: A Literature Review On Effective Practices And Barriers. Hoover Institution School Turnaround Strategies: A.

For more information, please contact Tracy Johnson, Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy at tracy@strongschoolsaction.org