



**Joint Statement of Austin Association of Public School Administrators,
Austin Council of PTAs Executive Council,
Austin Independent School District and Education Austin**

Jan. 11, 2021

Austin, Texas—Texas' school districts are faced with compounding concerns for the health and safety of all Texans due to a horrific pandemic; the educational, mental, and emotional well-being of Texas' youth; and the pending threat of decreased funding necessary to serve our students and community at this unprecedented time.

During these uncertain times, Austin's schools, parents, and teachers want to thank the Texas Education Agency for listening to Texas' school districts. Teachers and staff quickly pivoted this summer from unexpected closures and districts resumed operations in innovative ways. We are grateful that TEA has continued to allow parents and students the ability choose the educational setting that best meets their needs, but more must be done.

The Austin community requests increased flexibility for the remainder of this pandemic including, and most importantly, a continuation of the hold harmless agreement. As COVID-19 cases continue to increase, and more families are affected, our ability to provide a quality education in a safe environment is challenged daily.

As we understand TEA's responsibility to fund schools on a statewide level, we want to recognize that keeping our children, faculties, and community safe is best served on a local level. It is here we can more accurately evaluate and address the needs of our entire school community. As one of the over 1,022 ISDs in Texas, we are entrusted to make countless decisions to meet the safety and educational needs of our students, faculties, and their families every day. Education is our job, but safety and well-being are our responsibility.

We ask TEA to extend the hold harmless provision and allow districts local decision-making power during this unprecedented crisis. I think we all agree that the health and well-being of the children in our community is the number one priority in our state and preserving the health and safety of the professionals and educational supporters who stepped up, and continue to step up every day, to work to meet the intellectual, emotional, and social needs of our children is part of making that priority a reality.

Sincerely,

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