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Texas Education CAFE™ Advocacy Network

## Texas Policy Weekly Update

Each week, we are sharing the latest news about what's happening in Texas education policy and how you can make your voice heard.

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## Coming Up: Week of May 24

This is the last week of the 2021 regular session. The time period for public hearings has ended. You can watch floor action and possibly committee work at the links below.



[Watch House floor proceedings](#)



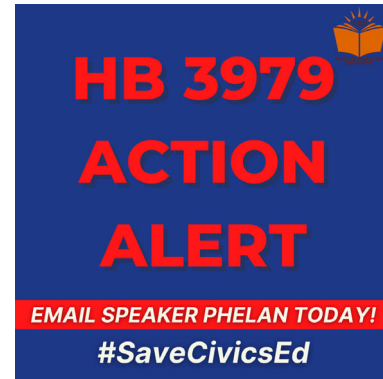
[Watch Senate floor proceedings](#)

Opportunities for Action

## Time to press for HB 3979 conference

HB 3979 was passed out by the Senate this weekend. Before it goes to the governor's desk, it must go back to the House since there are differences between the two. We are requesting the House to send the bill to a conference committee, where the House and Senate can meet to discuss concerns and major changes made in the Senate. This is crucial to be sure our voices are heard on HB 3979.

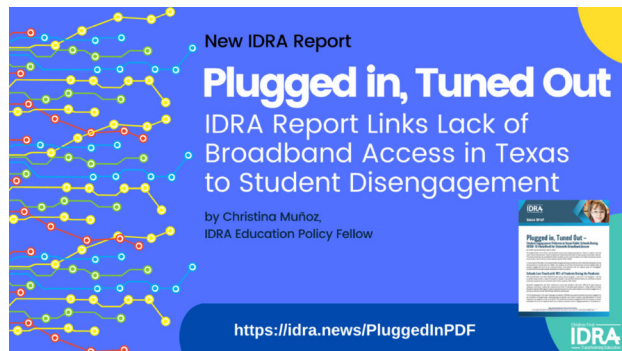
**You can help! [Send an email to Speaker Dade Phelan](#) asking him to send HB 3979 to a conference committee.**



## Highlights from Last Week

### IDRA Report Links Lack of Broadband Access to Student Disengagement

Since the transition to remote learning during the pandemic, schools struggle to reconnect with hundreds of thousands of students. IDRA released a new study last week that found that the problem is bigger than any school strategy. IDRA's report, [Plugged in, Tuned Out – A First Examination of Student Engagement Patterns in Texas Public Schools During COVID-19](#), makes clear that, in many parts of Texas, student disengagement during the pandemic was a direct result of limited broadband access.



Authored by Christina Muñoz, an IDRA Education Policy Fellow, the report includes data on how student engagement patterns differed across school district sizes showing that broadband Internet access was a significant predictor of full student engagement for larger, more urban school districts.

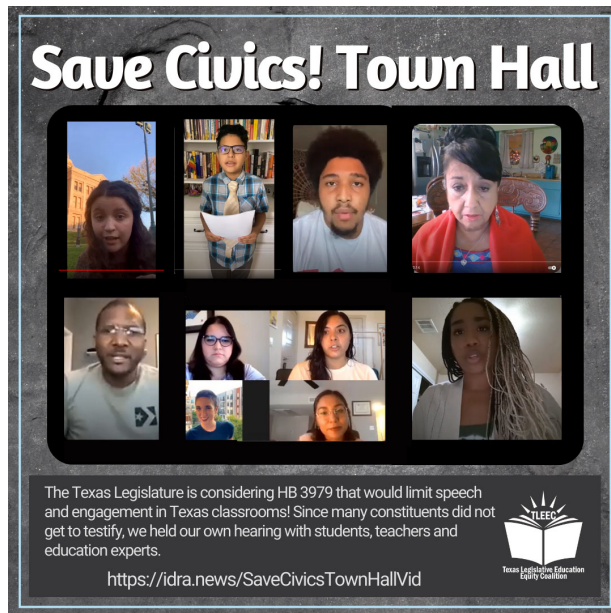
### Coalition Holds Events to Protect Free Speech in the Classroom

#### Virtual Town Hall

Leading up to the Senate floor debate on Friday, community members spoke out against HB 3979. Many constituents did not get to testify when the Senate State Affairs committee

suspended the rules and passed the bill without hearing the lines of people ready to present public testimony about why practical, real-life civics education is important. So, we held our own hearing.

[Watch the town hall](#) with two-minute testimony by teachers, students, educators and community members.



## Press Conference

The coalition against HB 3979 also held a virtual press conference featuring students, teachers, educators and superintendents.

Speakers were:

- Jahziel Leduna, student
- Dr. Jeannie Stone, Richardson ISD Superintendent
- Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Dallas ISD Superintendent
- Charlene Stark, senior advisor, strategic & legislative initiatives at North Texas Commission
- Candace Hunter, former social studies teacher
- Araceli García, IDRA Education Policy Fellow, moderator



[Watch the press conference.](#)

## Hundreds Speak Out Against HB 3979

[The list of organizations that oppose Texas HB 3979 has grown to 95.](#)

[289 historians sent a letter to the Senate.](#)

[The American Historical Association sent a letter to the Senate and the Lt. Governor.](#)

## IDRA & TLEEC Submit Testimony on Key Education Bills

IDRA submitted the following testimony last week.

[HB 3643 Takes Schools in the Opposite Direction of What's Best for Students by Expanding Virtual Education](#) – IDRA Testimony against House Bill 3643, submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee, May 18, 2021

## [Individual Graduation Committees Should be Available to All High School Students](#)

– IDRA Testimony for House Bill 999, Submitted to Texas Senate Education Committee, May 18, 2021

## [Digital Health and Wellness Are Essential to Supporting Healthy and Engaged Students](#)

– IDRA Testimony for House Bill 3489, Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee on May 18, 2021

TLEEC submitted the following testimony last week.

[Individual Graduation Committees Create Equitable Options for Graduation, especially for Black Students and Latino Students](#) – TLEEC Written Testimony For HB 999, Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee, May 18, 2021

## Video Advocacy Campaign

### Digitally Divided, Community United

**Students, Parents, Educators:  
How has the digital divide  
impacted you?**

**We need your voice! Record a  
15-second testimony.**

[Get details](#)

**Digitally Divided, Community United**  
**Got 15 seconds?**

**Students, Parents, Educators:  
How has the digital divide impacted you?**

The Texas Legislature is considering bills to support broadband access.

Join our video campaign!  
Share your story about how the digital divide has impacted your learning & your life.

**We need your voice!**  
**Record a 15-second testimony  
in English or Spanish**

**It's a fun way to have an impact!**

<https://idra.news/VideoAdvocacy>

**IDRA**  
Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition

## Tools & Resources

### [Texas House Public Comment Portal](#)

[How to testify in the #txlege Twitter thread](#) by the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC)

[How to Testify before the Texas Legislature](#), Infographic

[Learn more about IDRA's policy recommendations for Texas](#)

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### **IDRA Education Policy Priorities for Texas**

- ★ Fair Funding for Strong Public School Education
- ★ End Harmful Discipline to Create Safer Schools
- ★ Grow & Sustain School District Health
- ★ Excellent Education for Emergent Bilingual Students
- ★ College Preparation & Access that Expands Opportunities
- ★ A Comprehensive Equity Approach to Addressing COVID-19's Impact on Schools
- ★ Keep the Public in Public Education

<https://idra.news/TxEDPolicy1>



#### Previous issues

- Week of March 22, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of March 29, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of April 5, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of April 12, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of April 19, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of April 26, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of May 3, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of May 10, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)
- Week of May 17, 2021: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)

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