

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

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.

In this issue

- Coming Up: Week of April 19
- IDRA Office Hours Assistance – Submit your Comments this Week
- Video Advocacy Campaign: Digitally Divided, Community United
- Highlights from Last Week
- Student Advocacy Week
- Tools & Resources



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: [\(English\)](#) • [\(Español\)](#)

[Make sure you keep receiving these notices by subscribing to the Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network!](#)

Coming Up: Week of April 19

Hearings this week will address:

- Creating a statewide strategic plan for high-quality bilingual education
- Supporting the bilingual educator workforce through high school career options
- Bill that harms students and promotes discrimination by sex and gender identity in school athletics
- Creating a special education voucher program for supplemental services
- Advancing inequitable and narrowed curriculum standards and constraints on teachers

You can watch the hearings live online. Each hearing covers multiple bills (click the links below to see the agendas). For hearings in the Texas House, you can submit comments about any of the bills being discussed during the hearing using an online portal (even if they've moved on to a different bill).



Monday, April 19

Higher Education Committee
10:30 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Tuesday, April 20

Public Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Wednesday, April 21

Higher Education Committee
7:30 a.m. ([See notice](#))

[Watch hearings live](#)

[Watch past hearings](#)



Monday, April 19

State Affairs Committee
9:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Tuesday, April 20

Senate Education Committee
9:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Wednesday, April 21

Higher Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

[Watch hearings live](#)

[Watch past hearings](#)

Submit Your Comments this Week

IDRA holds virtual office hours to walk you through the process of submitting public comments online

Every Monday afternoon, IDRA helps students, families, educators and community members submit their own comments on education bills being debated by Texas lawmakers that week.
#ShareYourStory

What happens during IDRA's virtual office hours?

- Get information on bills that will be heard by lawmakers that week.
- Summarize your own story and how a proposed bill would impact schools in your community.
- See how to use Texas' online public comment portal so you can share your thoughts and ideas with lawmakers. Submit your comments!

Education Policy Testimony Help – Virtual Office Hours
Got 15 minutes to spare? Join us anytime between 4:30 - 5:30 to advocate for yourself, students and public schools!

- Get info on proposed education bills
- Write your story
- See how to use the comment portal
- Submit your position online for Texas legislators!

Mondays @ 4:30 pm cdt
Sign up here: <https://idra.news/Mondays>

IDRA
Institute for Democracy and Economic Freedom

Mondays • 4:30-5:30 pm cst
Bilingual event in English & Spanish

Register Now!

Register once to get the link and come back any time.

Note: IDRA will assist with bill information and the comment process, not on influencing a participant's position.

Video Advocacy Campaign

Digitally Divided, Community United

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

We need your voice! Record a 15-minute testimony

A new digital equity video campaign will uplift the voices of Texas community members impacted by the digital divide.

The Texas Legislature is considering measures to support broadband access. Using a virtual platform, we are inviting students, families, community members and educators to share their stories about how the digital divide has impacted their learning and their lives. Education equity is a key component of the digital divide.

We have set up a virtual platform for you to record a 15-second video in English or Spanish about how the digital divide has impacted you and what digital equity means to you.

It's a fun way to have an impact!

[Get details](#)



Highlights from Last Week

Araceli Garcia, IDRA Education Policy Fellow, testified to the Texas Senate Education Committee for SB 2066 on April 15, 2021, to change the language used in the Texas Education Code to label students from “limited English proficient” to the more asset-based “emergent bilingual.”



Parents submitted their own testimony about school funding. Here are excerpts:



"I'm asking for resources so that all districts have trained teachers so that all students can achieve a high level."

– Raquel Negrete



"We want to ask you that more funds be destined for the schools so that we have prepared teachers, help in counseling for the students, safe transportation and a safe environment for the protection of our children so that parents have more peace of mind knowing that their children go to school in an appropriate environment. That is going to take more resources for all that to happen."

– Mari Orozco



"We ask for funds so that all schools have more trained teachers to help all the children who have fallen behind."

– Susana Mares



"Teachers are going to have a bigger job. They are going to need more psychologists to support them. With all that is happening, the pandemic, the confinement and everything, somehow is going to have collateral damage. So, you need allocate funds to have either train the teachers more or hire specialized personnel to treat anxiety and stress."

– Brenda García

IDRA submitted the following testimony last week.

- [SB 2066 Makes a Simple Change for a Big Impact to Emergent Bilingual Students](#) – IDRA Testimony for SB 2066, presented to the Senate Education Committee, April 15, 2021
- [HB 4403 Supports Student Advising for Dual Credit](#) – IDRA Comments on HB 4403, submitted to the House Higher Education Committee, April 15, 2021

- [Texas Must Create a Statewide Plan for Improving Bilingual Education](#) – IDRA Testimony for SB 560 presented to the Senate Education Committee, April 12, 2021
- [HB 3485 Makes Discipline Data More Accessible to Parents and Families](#) – IDRA Testimony for House Bill 3485 presented to the House Public Education Committee, April 13, 2021
- [Adopt HB 3638 to Establish an African American Studies Advisory Board](#) – IDRA Testimony for HB 3638 presented to the House Public Education Committee, April 13, 2021
- [HB 59 Strips Schools of the Local Funding They Need for Equitable and Adequate Education](#) – IDRA Testimony against House Bill 59 submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee, April 12, 2021
- [Texas Must End Juvenile Curfew Ordinances to Help Break the School-to-prison Pipeline](#) – IDRA Testimony for HB 561 submitted to the House Juvenile Justice and Family Issues Committee, April 12, 2021

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition submitted the following testimony last week.

- [Suspending Nonessential Testing and High-Stakes Accountability During Disaster Supports Students and Communities](#) – TLEEC Written Testimony for HB 3668 submitted to the House Education Committee, April 13, 2021

Student Advocacy Week

Advocates Take Austin
2021
DIGITAL ADVOCACY WEEK

Monday, April 19, 2021
Twitter Townhall at 2pm

Tuesday, April 20, 2021
YI Issue area training from 1-2pm

Wednesday, April 21, 2021
Legislative Visits 10am-2pm

Thursday, April 22, 2021
Virtual Rally via FB Live at 6pm

Friday, April 23, 2021
Legislative Visits 12pm-4pm

YOUNG INVINCIBLES **#AdvocatesAtTXLege**

Are you a young person in Texas ready to lead the fight for justice?

Starting Monday April 19, 2021, join Young Invincibles for #AdvocatesAtTXLege, a virtual advocacy week.

Students across Texas are pushing for a transformative health care and higher education agenda — from protecting financial aid to fighting for mental health support and student debt relief.

Students are coming together to win the changes our communities deserve! Activities include a Twitter Townhall, rally, legislative training, and opportunities to meet with offices!

[See the schedule and register](#)

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](#)

[Join the Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network!](#)



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>



How to Testify before the Texas Legislature

Before any bill becomes a Law, it must first be heard in both a Senate and House committee. In these public meetings, people are given an opportunity to provide testimony on, for, or against a bill.

- ### Find for Your Opportunity to Testify

Have you got information about committee and hearing schedules on the state legislator's website, such as Texas Legislative Online. Check the schedule at least weekly. Determine when the bill you are interested in is scheduled for a hearing and get details about the hearing process. But first:

 - Do some research to see what the committee members have done or said regarding your issue. Understand the key points of the bill you will testify about.
 - Reach out to the office of the author of the bill to inform them of your position. This is even more critical if you hope to see changes and plan to oppose the bill.
 - This year, some committees will accept virtual testimony but some may not. It is important to provide written testimony for the committee to consider, particularly if you are unable to testify in-person or virtually. If a committee accepts virtual testimony, be sure to contact the committee clerk or director having the hearing to ask for directions on how to testify to ensure your testimony will be considered by the committee.
- ### Prepare Your Testimony

You can start writing before the hearing is scheduled. As you write, keep it focused so that you can deliver it in less than three minutes.

Creating and Introduction
Address the chair and the members of the committee appropriately. It can be as simple as, "Hello Chairman and members of the committee."

State your name, organization if any, and position on the bill. Remember, your position can be for, for, or against a bill and will be added to the public record database. This information is required by the rules of the legislature and will be reported by the committee.

If you are from one of the committee members' districts, it helps to recognize them if they are present and to introduce you as a constituent.

Key Points of the Testimony
Be clear about your position on the bill and provide feedback on the bill. If necessary, begin with a strong statement that reinforces your position along with the impact of the proposed legislation.

Show an interest that highlights the good, but on the edge of the proposed legislation. Hearing your own story if you are comfortable doing so can provide an added dimension to your testimony that will help focus the position for the committee. Often this is the most impactful part of your testimony and can help legislators understand the human element of the bill. Through this personal storytelling, you can make your testimony more relatable, especially when many people are signed on the testimony on the bill.

All testimony is public, so do not include private information, such as a student's full name.

Provide statistics or data that help support your position on the bill. This can help reinforce a personal story you share and reinforce your position with the committee members. To help build out the information consider reaching out to IDRA's grant partner for available research on education equity issues.

Closing Statement
Summarize your position and key points and end with the personal impact of the legislation. In speeches, the most remembered parts are the beginning and end. Use your closing to restate your position and provide opportunities for follow-up with the committee members. If you have time, thank the committee chair and the members for considering your testimony.
- ### Register to Testify

To testify in person, you must first register for the specific hearing where you are scheduled to testify. Hearings that are held in person are held in person. To register, you will fill out an address affidavit form. In the Texas House this can be done electronically outside the hearing room on a kiosk. In the Texas Senate, you will submit a paper form. Sometimes, certain organizations can appear the day before the hearing.

When you choose to register a position on the bill you can choose between on, for, or against. "On" or "for" means you intend to support the bill. "Against" means you intend to oppose the legislation. Registering "for" the bill indicates you or your organization would like to provide comments on why you support the bill and want it to pass. If you oppose the legislation, then you will want to register "against" the bill. This will allow you to share your concerns with the bill and provide solutions if you believe they will make the legislation better.

After you register, you will wait for the committee chairperson to call your name. Usually, the chair will call three or four people at a time to move to the testimony table together.

If you do not wish to provide verbal testimony, you can submit testimony in writing, which is referred to as "submitting a bill" to register a position on the bill.

If you are unable to participate in person, you can provide written testimony. Traditionally, written testimony will not be read aloud and would need to be delivered in person by someone who is able to attend the hearing. During the pandemic, the process may change to allow written testimony to be read aloud.
- ### Present Your Testimony

Read your testimony short and concise. Short written testimony is limited to less than three minutes, with possible additional time to answer committee members' questions.

Even though you have prepared a beautifully written testimony document, when you are sitting before the committee, try not to merely read your testimony out loud. Make eye contact with members of the committee. This can help legislators connect with you and your story and encourage more active testimony.

Avoid confrontations. Even if a committee member or the floor is arguing, watch your emotions and do not become upset. Focus on restating your key points if you are asked a question outside of your position.

Listen to other individuals testify and avoid repeating testimony already given. You can also highlight personal experiences that support your position or previous testimony you have heard. Take note of the questions and comments committee members raise.

Join our Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network
IDRA's family & community advocacy network focusing on education issues in the 2021 Texas legislative session
Sign up for email updates: <https://idra.news/Subscribe>

www.idra.org facebook.com/IDRAed @IDRAedu IDRA

January 2021, Illustration: Development Research Foundation • 1815 Calaghan Road, Suite 101 • San Antonio, Texas 78228 • 210-444-1710

[See infographic](#)

How to Meet with Your Elected Official

Meeting with your elected officials gives you the opportunity to share information, data and policy ideas about the issues that impact your community. Here are some tips to help you prepare.

Due to COVID-19, many in-person meetings have moved to virtual platforms, where people, regardless of their location, use an audio, video, or texting platform to connect online.

- ### Request a Meeting

Begin by reaching out to the official's office and requesting a meeting. While it is ideal to meet with the elected officials in person, they may be unavailable. But you can ask to meet with the staff person in the office who handles the subject area you want to meet about, like education or criminal justice.

Be clear about what you want to meet about and request specific dates and times to meet. If the meeting must happen virtually, determine the virtual platform you will use (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) and what will discuss and about the bill to be meeting.

Try to bring your number of participants in the meeting email so that everyone has enough time to participate.
- ### Get Ready

Do some research. See what the elected official has done or said that is related to your issue.

If you are attending the meeting in person, assign roles for each person.
The leader will develop an agenda and introduce everyone during the meeting. The leader will help guide the conversation, ensure everyone is given a chance to speak and communicate the requests to the elected official.

The Recorder will work with the leader to keep the meeting on track and will take detailed notes on the meeting.

The Participant will share personal experiences that highlight the results of the testimony and requests made of the elected official.

The Technology Facilitator can assist with the virtual platforms or needs of the group. This is largely a non-speaking role meant to assist with any technology needs.

Prepare the information and key points you wish to share with the elected official and office staff.
You may only have a few minutes to meet with your elected official or their staff. It is important to use the time fully and effectively. Agree to the points you would like to make before you go to avoid any disagreements during the meeting. Organize your thoughts during the meeting with your meeting agenda and have the several outcome of the meeting.

Decide what you want to get from the meeting. It is crucial to determine what your questions are and who will make them. Be specific.

Decide who will share personal stories, key facts and data. Be prepared to show how the issue is systemic, requiring policy change, rather than an isolated or individual problem.

Plan and rehearse the meeting. This is crucial to making sure you are prepared to answer any questions during the meeting. Rehearsing is especially important for individuals who might be sharing a difficult story and providing information for the meeting. Build into your meeting a positive conclusion where people feel supported and most push anyone to share something that makes them uncomfortable.

List questions the politician may ask or objections that can arise. Prepare your responses.

Have all the individuals joining the meeting time the virtual platform beforehand. This will help ensure when the actual meeting takes place everyone is displayed and keeps you on schedule.
- ### Conduct the Meeting

Have the leader of the meeting introduce everyone and give a brief overview of the pre-meeting agenda.

For virtual meetings, have everyone stay on mute when they are not speaking to decrease any unnecessary distractions. The leader should also be careful with calling on individuals to talk. This will help ensure members of your group do not talk over one another.

In virtual meetings, participants should turn on their camera if possible. Virtual meetings are more effective if people can see each other's expressions and body language. So clear is the camera to ensure what a virtual in-person meeting would feel like.

Be on time for the meeting and try to make yourself available based on the elected official's hectic schedule. Many elected officials have tight schedules, and any time you meet with them should be used effectively. Moreover, understand elected officials are there to serve the public. There should be mutual respect between both parties. It is their job as public servants to hear from their constituents about the concerns that affect their districts. You have the power within that office, and they should take the time to listen.

Keep the meeting tight and stay on the key points agenda. Make sure everyone who is supposed to speak has an opportunity. Sometimes, elected officials attempt to steer a conversation or break towards their agenda during a meeting. The leader should help stick to the pre-meeting agenda and requests.

Remember the conversation with local elected officials is by developing events that take place in the district. Legislators will be more inclined to act if they know an issue is being felt by their constituents.

Do not be worried about not knowing an answer to a question. Having an elected official that you will get back to them with an answer provides an opportunity for follow-up later. Never make-up an answer. You will have your committee with the office and take out a great chance to conduct a dialogue with the office.

Set a timeline for follow-up or receive an answer. Be sure to ask when you can contact, confirm when you can check back, and offer additional information if necessary.
- ### Follow up Afterwards

Ask the recorder and anyone else who took notes to review what took place during the meeting and determine what follow-up is needed for the elected official and the office.

Contact the office by email or letter to thank them for their time, provide additional information, and review your requests and any commitments made during the meeting. Be sure to provide the elected official contact to send in person.

Hold the elected official to the promised deadline for responses and schedule follow-up actions or meetings as needed.

If necessary, schedule a follow-up call to assign who will be following up on specific items.

Join our Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network
IDRA's family & community advocacy network focusing on education issues in the 2021 Texas legislative session
Sign up for email updates: <https://idra.news/Subscribe>

www.idra.org facebook.com/IDRAed @IDRAedu IDRA

January 2021, Illustration: Development Research Foundation • 1815 Calaghan Road, Suite 101 • San Antonio, Texas 78228 • 210-444-1710

[See infographic](#)

Research Events Pressroom About Us Website

Children First

IDRA

— Transforming Education

5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
San Antonio, TX 78228
Phone: 210-444-1710

Reach Out To Us

