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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 April 26

Hearings this week will address:

- School counselor capacity to serve students directly
- Student mental and behavioral health resources
- Charter school accountability
- Educator preparation for teaching emergent bilingual students, dyslexic students and students receiving mental health support

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).



Tuesday, April 27
Public Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

Thursday, April 29
Higher Education Committee
8:00 a.m. ([See notice](#))

[Watch hearings live](#)

[Watch past hearings](#)



Tuesday, April 27
Senate Education Committee
9:00 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!

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

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

Register Now!

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

Bill threatens Texas Top Ten Percent Plan

The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan has opened the doors of Texas' public universities to hard-working students from families with limited incomes, communities of color and rural communities who graduate in the top 10% of their high school class. Before the Top Ten Percent Plan, many of these students were denied access to Texas' public universities, limiting opportunities for them, their families and their communities.

This Wednesday, the Senate Higher Education Committee will hold a public hearing on SB 1091, which seeks to drastically limit the number of deserving students who can be automatically admitted to nearly all Texas public universities.

This bill would make attending college more difficult for high school students across the state who have worked hard, done their best with the opportunities they have and achieved at a high level. It also will limit the racial, socioeconomic and geographic diversity that is so important in schools.

For more information see IDRA's [Top Ten Percent Plan Resources](#), including [Top Ten Percent Plan Infographic](#), and IDRA policy brief, [The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan's Legacy in Supporting Equal Access to College](#).

Highlights from Last Week

IDRA submitted the following testimony last week.

[HB 3489 Supports Digital Health and Wellness, Which Are Essential to Supporting Students](#) – IDRA comments in support of HB 3489 submitted to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 20, 2021

[HB 4042 Harms Transgender Students by Prohibiting Their Participation in Team Sports Aligned with their Gender Identity](#) – IDRA Testimony against House Bill 4042 presented to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 20, 2021

[HB 1744 Helps Address the Three-Decades-Long Teacher Shortage in Bilingual Education](#) – IDRA Testimony for House Bill 1744 presented to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 20, 2021

[Texas Must Create a Statewide Plan for Improving Bilingual Education](#) – IDRA



Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes testified before the Texas House Public Education Committee to help address the teacher shortage by providing critical financial assistance to prospective bilingual educators.

Testimony for HB 2258 presented to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 20, 2021

[SB 1277 Supports College Access with Student Advising for Dual Credit](#) –

IDRA Comments on SB 1277 submitted before the Texas House Higher Education Committee, April 20, 2021



Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes testified for HB 2258 to set measurable goals to increase the number of certified bilingual educators, expand dual language immersion programs, and implement clear data collection and monitoring for emergent bilingual student success.

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition [sent a letter](#) to Governor Abbott, Texas Commissioner of Education Morath and Commissioner of Higher Education Keller urging them to ensure that federal COVID-19 relief monies are used to advance those goals and address the inequities in our educational systems that have been worsened by the pandemic.

Texas Plan Must Address Digital Divide in Education

IDRA [released](#) a report, [Digital Destination – Texas Needs Broadband Connectivity for All Students & Families](#), on the digital divide’s effects on Texas students and families and what Texas should do to secure equitable access to broadband for Texas’ most vulnerable student populations. The report includes testimonies from students and community members about the challenge Internet access is for school districts.

Texas Schools Need Federal Relief Funds Now!

To address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government allocated billions of dollars for K-12 schools and colleges. Unfortunately, Texas leaders are choosing not to accept those funds, leaving schools without critical relief monies. IDRA [published a statement](#) this week calling for Texas to stop waiting to access funds and not to use federal monies to supplant state funding for public schools.



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

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

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>



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