

Fund State Requirements at Actual Cost: Safety and Security

Funding the school safety and security requirements the state sets at what they actually cost districts

Background

The State of Texas sets the rules for school safety and security, one of the fastest-growing costs in school district budgets. The requirements are mandatory, costs are rising, and state funding has not kept pace with what districts must spend to comply.

When state funding falls short of the cost of a state requirement, the difference is paid from district general operating funds. Those are the same funds that pay for teachers, instruction, and operations for all students. For districts subject to recapture, it is local revenue that remains after recapture payments are made to the state.

Following the 2022 shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, the Legislature enacted major new campus safety requirements. The official fiscal notes for those requirements did not estimate what they would cost school districts.

State safety requirements

The table below summarizes what the Legislative Budget Board fiscal note for each major requirement said about the cost to districts.¹²³

Fiscal Notes for Major School Safety Requirements		
Requirement	Law	Fiscal Note on District Cost
At least one armed security officer at every campus during school hours; expanded safety planning, audits, and facility standards	HB 3 (88th, 2023)	Impact "potentially significant" but "cannot be determined"
Silent panic alert technology in every classroom beginning in 2025-26	SB 838 (88th, 2023)	No state cost; district costs "would vary"; no estimate
Safety allotment raised to \$20 per student in ADA and \$33,540 per campus	SB 260 (89th, 2025)	Estimated state cost only (~\$241 million per year)

School Safety Allotment

SB 260 doubled the per-student amount and more than doubled the per-campus amount of the School Safety Allotment beginning in 2025-26.⁴

¹[Fiscal Note, HB 3](#), Legislative Budget Board, 88th Legislature (2023).

²[Fiscal Note, SB 838](#), Legislative Budget Board, 88th Legislature (2023).

³[Fiscal Note, SB 260, Conference Committee Report](#), Legislative Budget Board, 89th Legislature (May 28, 2025).

⁴[Senate Bill 260, enrolled](#), 89th Texas Legislature (2025), amending Texas Education Code §48.115(a). The per-student amount increases \$1 for every \$50 the maximum basic allotment exceeds \$6,160.

School Safety Allotment			
	Before HB 3	HB 3 (2023)	SB 260 (2025)
Per student in ADA	\$9.72	\$10.00	\$20.00
Per campus	—	\$15,000	\$33,540
Typical 600-student campus	~\$5,800	~\$21,000	~\$46,000

Cost of compliance

Districts report that one armed officer costs well more than the per-campus allotment:

- Dallas ISD estimated \$65,000 to \$70,000 per campus for an armed guard.⁵
- San Antonio-area superintendents reported an average overhead cost of about \$55,000 per officer.⁶
- Ector County ISD estimated about \$79,000 per officer in the first year, including outfitting and a vehicle.⁷
- Tomball ISD and Northside ISD superintendents have said fully funding safety requirements would take about \$100 per student.^{8,9}

A January 2025 Texas Senate Education Committee report found that about 45% of districts had complied with the armed officer requirement, while about 52% had requested and received a good cause exception, which the law allows when a district lacks funding or qualified personnel. Nearly 63% of large districts (26 or more campuses) sought exceptions.¹⁰

The officer is one cost. The same allotment must also cover classroom panic alert technology, access control, fencing, vestibules, cameras, training, emergency operations planning, and audits.

Funding Options

The following concepts would align state funding with the cost of the school safety and security requirements the state sets.

Option A: Fund School Safety at Actual Cost

Concept: Raise the per-campus School Safety Allotment to an amount sufficient to cover at least one armed officer at each campus, and fund other required safety measures separately.

Example: At a per-campus amount of \$75,000, a typical 600-student campus would receive about \$87,700 per year (\$75,000 + 600 × \$21.10).

Advantages:

- Directly tied to the requirement the state imposed.

⁵[School leaders say Texas' campus safety funding doesn't cover new state mandates](#), KERA News / Texas Tribune (Nov. 1, 2023).

⁶[New safety officer requirement will cost school districts millions](#), KENS 5 (2023).

⁷[ECISD good cause exception coverage](#), Odessa Headlines (2023).

⁸[Legislature considers paying much more for school safety](#), Texas Tribune via KSAT (Feb. 10, 2025).

⁹[Texas school district officials want more school safety funding](#), Spectrum News (Apr. 20, 2026).

¹⁰[Majority of Texas school districts aren't in compliance with armed security requirement](#), KERA / Texas Public Radio (Feb. 13, 2025), reporting on the Texas Senate Committee on Education interim report (Jan. 2025).

- Reduces reliance on good cause exceptions.
- Predictable statewide cost.

Cost Formula: Estimated Cost = Number of Campuses × (Target Per-Campus Amount – \$33,540), using 8,000 campuses as a conservative statewide count (at \$75,000: $8,000 \times \$41,460 \approx \$332$ million).

Estimated Annual State Cost — Option A	
Per-Campus Amount	Estimated Additional Cost
\$65,000	\$252 million
\$75,000	\$332 million
\$85,000	\$412 million

Policy Rationale: More than half of districts have not met the armed officer requirement, which indicates that the requirement is not adequately funded.

Considerations: Officer costs vary by region and by whether a district uses its own police department, a school resource officer, or contracted security. Indexing the allotment to cost growth would prevent the gap from reopening.

Option B: Estimate Local Costs Before Requirements Take Effect

Concept: Require fiscal notes for bills that impose new requirements on school districts to include an estimate of the local cost of compliance, developed with TEA and district input, and fund the requirement at that estimated cost or delay its effective date until funding is provided.

Advantages:

- Gives legislators the full cost before they vote.
- Applies to all future requirements, not only school safety.
- Low administrative cost.

Policy Rationale: The fiscal notes for HB 3 and SB 838 stated that district costs could not be determined or would vary. Legislators should know what a requirement costs before it takes effect.

Considerations: Local cost estimates will vary by district size and existing infrastructure. A statewide range based on a sample of districts would be sufficient for budgeting purposes.

Impact on Recapture Districts

Option A would increase each district's Tier One entitlement. For most districts, the increase would be paid as additional state aid. For districts subject to recapture under Chapter 49, a higher entitlement would reduce the amount of recapture the district owes, allowing more locally raised revenue to remain in the district. The LBB fiscal note for SB 260 reflects this: its estimated state cost includes reduced recapture payments of \$30.3 million in fiscal year 2026 and \$39.0 million in fiscal year 2027.¹¹ Because recapture payments are a method of finance for the state, the reduction in recapture is part of the state cost shown in the Option A estimates, not a cost in addition to it.

¹¹[Fiscal Note, SB 260, Conference Committee Report](#), Legislative Budget Board (May 28, 2025).

Fiscal estimates are preliminary. School safety figures use the SB 260 allotment amounts, a conservative count of 8,000 campuses, and district-reported officer costs. Estimates do not include effects on Tier Two funding. Actual fiscal notes would depend on legislative language and TEA implementation.

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About Texas School Coalition

The Texas School Coalition is a membership organization that was founded in 1997 to represent property-wealthy independent school districts whose local tax collections are subject to recapture. The mission of the Texas School Coalition is to advocate for the resources to provide all Texas public school students an excellent education and for a school finance system that balances sustainable state and local investments in the best interests of students and taxpayers.