Texas School Coalition

Committed to the success of public education for all students in Texas!

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PRIORITIES FOR THE 85TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

2017

Avoid any further funding reductions for public schools

One-third of Texas school districts still have per-student funding levels below that of the 2010-2011 school year, following the cuts to public education instituted in 2011. While some of the funding cuts have been restored, more than 300 districts are still struggling to get back to where they were six years ago, without taking the rising cost of inflation and student needs into account. Schools have already cut many programs that previously served students; they have increased class sizes, reduced staff, and realized every possible efficiency. They cannot sustain further cuts.

Reduce the harmful effects of Robin Hood recapture

When Robin Hood was added to law in 1993, 34 districts paid $127 million in order to equalize funding among districts statewide. Now, 23 years and $20 billion later, 250 districts are expected to pay $2 billion in recapture during the 2016-17 school year, with almost 200 more that will be required to pay recapture if they must increase their tax rates. Local taxpayers continue to pay more as property values increase, but local school districts are not the beneficiaries of those dollars. Rather, the State's funding obligation for schools is lessened by the increased burden for local school districts required to pay recapture. We must reduce the overreliance on local taxes as a source of state revenue.

Keep the promise of Additional State Aid for Tax Reduction (ASATR)

When the Legislature reduced property tax rates by one-third in 2006, they guaranteed that school districts would not lose funding as a result of that action by creating Additional State Aid for Tax Reduction (ASATR). In 2011, the State reduced funding for ASATR and enacted a repeal of ASATR effective September 1, 2017. Now, as the fiscal cliff nears, some schools are faced with the prospect of cutting even more from budgets that have already been significantly reduced to the point of cutting critical services for students. Many are contemplating tax increases when state funding intended to reduce taxes goes away. In some instances, there isn't enough capacity allowed under the current cap to make up for this loss, and it could result in some districts closing their doors.

Ensure the funding for public schools remains with <u>public</u> schools

Parental involvement is important to student success. But public tax dollars must have public accountability and be used in a manner accessible and beneficial to all students in Texas. Limited public resources should be used toward innovation and choice within the public school system.

Increase local control for locally-collected revenue

The property tax structure functions differently for school districts than any other taxing entity. In some instances, election requirements prevent locally-elected officials from giving relief to local property taxpayers. Greater control is needed for local officials to manage tax rates and revenue in the manner that is in the best interest of taxpayers.