

May 11, 2025

To: Texas House of Representatives

Re: HB 4 – AGAINST

Dear Members of the Texas House of Representatives,

Since our founding in 1996, EdTrust has never wavered in our commitment to transparency and accountability in public education - for students, parents, and the public. This commitment is reflected in our name: an excellent public education system is rooted in trust. When that system succeeds or falls short, for one school or one child, we must face the truth and work together to better resource and serve students, families, and communities.

As filed, the original intent of HB 4 was to strengthen the assessment and accountability system for our public schools; in its current form, the bill does exactly the opposite, threatening the very foundations of fairness and transparency that are more necessary than ever to protect the future of public education and improve outcomes for 5.4 million Texas students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. Here's how:

- **Returns to “nationally norm-referenced” tests that hide standards-based proficiency.** Nearly 30 years ago, Texas led the nation by pioneering the creation of standards-based assessments designed to measure every student's mastery of the same knowledge and skills used to guide their classroom instruction. HB 4 would return us to an era when states used nationally norm-referenced tests as their statewide achievement test. Because these tests are designed to compare students to each other, rather than against specific learning standards, the results were used to inflate performance and hide disparities, allowing states to feel good about their performance even if many didn't deserve it. At a time when Texas ranks 37th in 4th grade reading proficiency and just 36% of low-income 3rd graders are reading on grade level, this proposed move would obscure low performance.
- **Waters down school ratings by including measures that consider access and inputs, rather than student outcomes.** HB 4 proposes that no less than 10 percent of campus ratings should be tied to indicators including access to extracurricular activities and teacher completion of state-required professional development. While the proposed indicators are important for informing school improvement efforts, using them to measure campus performance will only serve to inflate campus ratings and further obscure academic outcomes of students. Defenders of HB 4 have blatantly misrepresented this fact, falsely stating that the bill would increase the percentage of a school's A-F rating tied to student performance.
- **Eliminates measures from the accountability system designed to close achievement gaps.** HB 4 reduces this weight within the A-F rating system from 30 percent to five percent, with a mechanism to eliminate it completely in the future. This is a deliberate attempt to destroy our state's proud legacy of honest reporting on student outcomes. Rather than facing and addressing persistent socioeconomic and racial opportunity gaps head on, this change allows our public school system to ignore them and avoid directing resources to underserved students and communities.

Don't be fooled by false promises: this version of HB 4 will only weaken our public schools by making them less transparent and less accountable. We will always challenge the status quo on behalf of underserved students and remain committed to working with you to improve our assessment and accountability system to accomplish that mission.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Feinstein
State Director