

**March 18, 2025**

To: House Public Education Committee

Re: House Bill 213

Position: For

Honorable Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Bernal, and members of the House Public Education Committee,

EdTrust in Texas and 5 supporting organizations appreciate the opportunity to **submit written testimony in support of House Bill 213 (HB 213)**. As the House considers data-driven strategies to improve student achievement, we commend you for recognizing consistent attendance as a prerequisite for academic progress.

**Chronic absenteeism occurs when a student misses 10% or more of instructional time for any reason – excused or unexcused.** A wealth of research demonstrates that chronic absenteeism poses a serious threat to student success at all grade levels, negatively impacting 3rd grade reading proficiency,<sup>i</sup> high school graduation,<sup>ii</sup> and postsecondary and workforce success.<sup>iii</sup> In fact, chronic absenteeism is the strongest predictor of dropping out of high school, more accurate than test scores.<sup>iv</sup>

**In Texas, chronic absenteeism has doubled since the pandemic, with 20% of all students missing at least 10% of instructional time.**<sup>v</sup> This alarming increase has impacted all regions and student groups, with rates of 25% for economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities who often lack the resources to make up for unfinished learning in school.

It has never been more necessary to address chronic absenteeism in Texas schools. **HB 213 establishes essential building blocks to address chronic absenteeism by defining it in statute, ensuring consistent data reporting, and identifying chronically absent students as “at risk” of dropping out.**

#### **I. HB 213 ENSHRINES A DEFINITION OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN STATE STATUTE**

Chronic absenteeism data was first publicly reported by the Texas Education Agency for the 2018-19 school year, as required to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. HB 213 ensures this powerful indicator is enshrined in the Texas Education Code, defining chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of instructional time for any reason.

#### **II. HB 213 ENSURES PUBLIC REPORTING OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM DATA**

Chronic absenteeism data is an essential tool to improve attendance. Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is based on how many students typically show up to school each day but masks when absences are adding up for individual students. Because chronic absenteeism reflects attendance at the student level, it serves as an early warning of disengagement that can be used to identify and intervene when a particular student is missing school.

The reporting lag for chronic absenteeism data in Texas is currently 18 months. Data from the 2023-24 school year won't be publicly available until TAPR reports are released in November 2025. This makes

Texas one of the slowest in the nation to release this information as many states are releasing end-of-year data earlier and some are even providing updated data at multiple points during the school year.

More transparent and timely data is desperately needed to inform strategic goals, resources, and interventions at the student, campus, and district level.

### III. HB 213 RECOGNIZES CHRONICALLY ABSENT STUDENTS AS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Research shows that a student who is chronically absent in any year between 8th and 12th grade is seven times more likely to drop out of school.<sup>vi</sup> Other studies have found attendance to be a better predictor of dropout than test scores. Adding this evidence-based indicator to the state's list of criteria for identifying students at-risk of dropping out of school will help ensure they receive additional support and interventions to improve both their academic and life outcomes.

Attendance is a solvable problem with several evidence-based interventions, but chronic absenteeism data is essential to unlock valuable information about students' needs, instructional engagement, and connection between students, families, and staff. **HB 213 presents a much-needed foundation for Texas schools to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student outcomes.**

Gratefully,  
Jonathan Feinstein  
State Director  
The Education Trust in Texas

#### Supporting Organizations:



<sup>i</sup> Attendance Works. (2014). Attendance in the early grades: Why it matters for reading: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Attendance-in-the-Early-Grades.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Allensworth, E. & Easton, J. (2007). What matters for staying on track and graduating in Chicago public high schools: <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/what-matters-staying-track-and-graduating-chicago-public-schools>

<sup>iii</sup> Ginsburg, A., et al. (2014). Absences add up: How school attendance influences student success: [https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Absences-Add-Up\\_September-3rd-2014.pdf](https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Absences-Add-Up_September-3rd-2014.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Education Commission of the States (2017). Chronic Absenteeism: A key indicator of student success: <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/chronic-absenteeism-a-key-indicator-of-student-success.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) 2023

<sup>vi</sup> Utah Education Policy Center (2012). Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism: [https://uepc.utah.edu/\\_resources/documents/chronicabsenteeismresearchbrief.pdf](https://uepc.utah.edu/_resources/documents/chronicabsenteeismresearchbrief.pdf)

