

**April 29, 2025**

To: Chairman Creighton and Houston-Area Senate Delegation

From: EdTrust in Texas & 21 Supporting Organizations

Re: Thank you for passing Senate Bill 2253

Dear Chairman Creighton and Houston-Area Senators,

On behalf of EdTrust in Texas and the 21 undersigned organizations representing school districts, educator preparation programs, business leaders, educators, and parents, thank you for passing Senate Bill 2253 and taking meaningful action to build the supply of well-prepared teachers in the Houston region and across Texas! We are especially appreciative of Chairman Creighton's continued leadership to advance this bold and necessary legislation.

Last year, 50% percent of new teachers hired in the Houston region were uncertified. This is an alarming symptom of a long-standing problem that requires real investment in teacher preparation pathways that will attract and equip candidates with real-world training and support to enter the classroom ready to stay, succeed, and positively impact student learning. The research is clear: teachers are the single most important school factor that impacts student learning, and students taught by uncertified teachers lose months of learning.

SB 2253 recognizes that great teachers don't just happen, they are developed through results-driven, practice-based preparation – like paid residencies – and early career mentoring. Rather than shortcuts or quick fixes, this legislation invests in exactly the kind of lasting and effective solutions that we have been working together to scale in our region.

Convened by US PREP, 17 educator preparation programs, 10 school districts, and 12 community-based organizations are partnering to tackle our region's teacher workforce needs and increase the number of candidates completing high-quality training. This effort includes 11 local community colleges and 11 four-year universities that have established clear, streamlined transfer pathways for teacher candidates who begin their preparation at a community college before completing at a four-year institution. By removing barriers and aligning course requirements, more efficient and affordable routes into the profession will increase the number of aspiring teachers who successfully complete their degree and certification.

There are plenty of people in the Houston area who want to become teachers - in fact, a recruiting platform developed with TEACH.org and local partners has attracted over 36,000 aspiring educators and is actively connecting them to programs across our region.

But interest alone isn't enough. SB 2253 encourages financially accessible and attractive entry points into high-quality preparation programs like paid, yearlong residency partnerships. For

example, Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) has placed over 120 residents in seven districts, 98% of whom have been retained five years into their careers. Despite the effectiveness of the model, two of PVAMU's strongest district partners - including one small, rural district - have recently been unable to continue offering residency stipends due to funding constraints - resulting in the loss of teacher residents in those districts.

University of Houston (UH), the largest producer of teacher residents in the region, has prepared over 3,200 candidates since 2015 and offered paid residency placements with 15 partner school districts. Because candidates are already embedded in schools for a full year, they are often hired immediately upon completion with more than 90% remaining in the classroom beyond their third year.

To date, these efforts have relied largely upon philanthropic donations and expiring federal relief funds and are at serious risk of contraction or elimination without state investment this session. SB 2253 would provide an urgently needed infusion of targeted funding to incentivize partnerships proven to produce better prepared teachers, reduce turnover, and lead to brighter futures for our students.

Thank you for your leadership to ensure all Texas students are in classrooms with effective teachers. Please continue to pave the way to achieve this during the remainder of session.

Sincerely,

Judith Cruz  
Assistant Director, Houston Region



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