

Testimony on Senate Bill 4

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SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today, and for your dedicated service to the State of Texas, particularly during these difficult budget times. My name is Jerel Booker and as Executive Director of Stand for Children, I have the privilege to speak today on behalf of parents and education advocates who are part of a Stand grassroots network.

Stand for Children is an independent voice for students whose mission is to help all children get the excellent public education and strong support they need to thrive. Our goal is a statewide system of vibrant, high-performing schools that are great places to teach and learn with stable funding and strong leadership.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 4. As you know, research has shown that great teachers and leaders are the most important factor in student success and achievement. Right now, Texas lacks a state policy for identifying, developing, and retaining effective teachers. We must be able to identify the most capable individuals, ensure they enter and stay in the teaching profession, provide them with the support they need to help students learn at the highest possible level, and hold them responsible for student academic progress.

The best teach in Texas. Our educators do wonderful work to educate our children. However, their appraisal system, certification, and professional development does not truly support or inform their success. Educator appraisals must be grounded in the realities of the classroom and use multiple measures that include student academic performance (growth) as a significant factor in annual teacher evaluations. These evaluations provide the basis for individualized professional development so good teachers can become great. Like any skilled professional, teachers are responsible for excellent results. To meet that responsibility, teachers deserve clear expectations and regular feedback about how they're doing to meet those goals. A meaningful evaluation tool will support the professional development of teachers and create better outcomes for kids.

Senate Bill 4 has a number of valuable teacher quality elements in the bill particularly the provisional certification option, revision of teacher certification exams, and aligning professional development to the appraisal. Overall, a comprehensive metric should include growth in student performance, observations in the classroom, comprehensive survey assessments and school-wide growth in student performance. In order to accurately design and implement this metric, multiple stakeholders that include teachers, principals, district leaders, parents, education non-profits, and the business community should be participate in the development process.

I respectfully request a favorable vote on Senate Bill 4 and I thank you for the time you have provided me.