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## **Senator Larry Taylor Files Bill to Reform the Public School Finance System**

March 8, 2019- (Austin, Texas) Today, Senator Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood) filed Senate Bill 4, a bill to reform the public school finance system.

Senate Bill 4 is the result of a year-long study of the school finance system by the Texas Commission on Public School Finance, of which Senator Taylor was a member. SB 4 is the product of hundreds of hours of discussion between elected officials, school district representatives, members of the business community, teachers, and parents. "Texas has its fair share of challenges," said Senator Taylor, "but our schools and students have the potential to be leaders worldwide. Our focus should be on improving the academic outcomes of our low income students, who make up the largest and fastest growing demographic in our public school system."

SB 4 addresses this and several other issues through a comprehensive restructuring of the current antiquated and complicated school finance system. SB 4 places a particular emphasis on:

**Early learning/reading-** Specifically pre-kindergarten through third grade. Only 29% of Texas fourth graders are at or above proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam. SB 4 aims to improve these statistics by providing districts with access to resources to fund full-day pre-kindergarten for educationally disadvantaged students. It also provides incentive payments to districts for improving reading outcomes among educationally disadvantaged children and English Language Learners. Third grade represents a critical threshold for early readers; until third grade a child learns to read, after third grade a child reads to learn.

**Retaining quality teachers-** Every child deserves to be taught by a high quality teacher. Every teacher deserves the opportunity to earn a salary befitting this revered role. SB 4 creates an Educator Effectiveness Program that will allow districts to develop ways to provide merit-based raises to its best teachers. These salary increases will be even higher if the teacher teaches at a low-income school.

**Preparation for life beyond the K-12 classroom-** As Texas students go, so goes Texas. In order to keep Texas an economic powerhouse and the best place to live and raise a family, Texas schools must prepare high school seniors for college, career, and military service in a way that is responsive to a dynamic 21st century economy. SB 4 does this by expanding blended learning, offering 8th graders the opportunity to pursue career technical education, and creating outcome based incentives for schools that prepare low income kids for life after high school.



**Supporting those who need it most-** Some Texas children face economic or educational hardships that hamper their ability to thrive through no fault of their own. SB 4 adopts the philosophy that every child should be given the tools necessary to succeed in school. SB 4 aims to increase awareness of the spectrum and density of poverty and how that affects learning. This means that schools that offer compensatory education services for students with more intensive needs will receive additional funds from the state.

Governor Greg Abbott released the following statement on SB 4:

With two pivotal school finance bills filed, we have an opportunity over the next several months to achieve meaningful school finance reform in Texas. I thank Senator Taylor for his leadership in filing this bill, as well as his tireless work on the school finance commission.

Senator Taylor offered the following:

My sincerest thanks goes to my fellow members of the Texas Commission on Public School Finance, Lieutenant Governor Patrick and Governor Abbott for their dogged pursuit of solutions for the betterment of all Texas kids. I look forward to continued collaboration with Chairman Huberty as SB 4 and House Bill 3 make their way through the legislative process. I am confident that the Legislature will pass major school finance overhaul by the end of the session because frankly, there are 5.4 million Texans who cannot wait another two years for us to get this right.

The full text of Senate Bill 4 will be available at

<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB4>