



August 14, 2017

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President and CEO
Greater Houston Partnership
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President and CEO
Houston Endowment
600 Travis, Suite 6400
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As members of the Legislature representing the City of Houston, we are acutely sensitive to your efforts to promote the economic prosperity and fiscal soundness of the Energy Capital of the World. Indeed, about one-in-four jobs in Texas are in the Greater Houston area.

Regardless of background, ideology or political affiliation, the Houston Delegation is united behind your missions to advance the "equity of opportunity for the people of greater Houston" and to make "Houston one of the best places to live, work and build a business."

It is with this common bond and in the sincere interest of ensuring a skilled, talented workforce as a basis for sustaining our economy and guaranteeing prosperity for all our citizens, we respectfully request your prompt commitment to supporting the Houston Independent School District as the region's primary labor force pipeline.

As you are aware, HISD is currently under the threat of conservatorship by the State of Texas due to low student performance at a number of its campuses. If this occurs, a significant portion of our region's economic vitality may be adversely affected in the short term. In the long term, employment and skills development will markedly suffer and, conversely, crime and the prison population will increase.

One concerning consequence of failing to improve our neighborhood schools is a negative hit to bond ratings. Initial analysis has revealed that a state-run conservatorship could negatively impact HISD's bond ratings, risking already limited resources. Further, such action could have indirect, long-term negative effects on the Houston region's quality of life as seen in localities and states such as New Orleans, Louisiana; Tennessee and Michigan. These residual effects in turn could affect Houston's long-term fiscal outlook.

We submit to you that HISD's struggle to improve its schools is not merely the school district's problem. This is a Houston problem, affecting virtually every level of our private and public sectors. Ultimately, if Houston suffers, Texas suffers. When Houston succeeds, Texas succeeds.

While the current condition of some of HISD's schools may seem bleak, there is room for optimism. The district's Achieve 180 initiative, aimed at turning around student performance and increasing post-secondary preparation, has been successful at dramatically reducing the number of schools designated by the Texas Education Agency as "Improvement Required," or IR.

However, without a complete commitment from the entire community, especially the business community, it will be extremely difficult for the district to meet its goals.

We therefore request the Greater Houston Partnership and Houston Endowment tap into their considerable resources and make a commitment today to provide expertise, volunteers, guidance, and financial backing to turn the tide for our community schools.

Your considerable reservoir of talent, particularly in math and sciences, can help convert standards that currently serve as a barrier to student success into a springboard for post-secondary achievement. Financial incentives for high-achieving educators who have proven they can turn around student performance, will have an exponentially positive impact on assessments. And, your workforce's personal investment and volunteer effort in their schools' classrooms will send the signal to students, parents and teachers that your members' future is directly linked that of their community.

The Houston Delegation sincerely appreciates the commitment to education by your membership throughout the years and fully recognizes your interest in assuring that our community remains the best place for families and opportunity in the state and the nation.

In the coming days, we will work with parents, teachers, local elected officials, HISD Superintendent Richard Carranza and the board of trustees to address the district's needs and forge a path forward.

Working together, we will ensure that our future remains bright. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Senator Boris L. Miles



Senator John Whitmire



Senator Sylvia R. Garcia



Senator Joan Huffman



Representative Senfronia Paige Thompson



Representative Harold V. Dutton, Jr.



Representative Garnet F. Coleman



Representative Jessica Cristina Farrar



Representative Armando Walle



Representative Hubert Vo



Representative Alma A. Allen



Representative Ana Hernandez



Representative Gene Wu



Representative Shawn Thierry