



SARAH ECKHARDT

STATE SENATOR • DISTRICT 14

October 3, 2025

Neighbors and friends,

We love our public schools in Austin. Unfortunately, state leaders aren't sharing the love.

More standardized testing, more accountability rating systems, more underfunded mandates and more fear and suspicion have been piled on our students, teachers and administrators. Meanwhile, state dollars have been siphoned off to charter and private schools with little to no accountability. State legislation over the years has intentionally created an exodus to less regulated charter schools, even though they are consistently less effective at preparing every Texas student for success after school. The result is districts across the state stretching every penny to cover essentials—from supplies to mental health to teacher retention—**while being forced to ask for more from their communities to fill gaps made wider by state policies.**

This session, before a single hearing was held about a single dollar for public schools, state leaders passed a billion-dollar scheme to divert our tax dollars directly to private schools. They did it while withholding the funding schools need to survive (let alone thrive) as leverage in negotiations over issues that had nothing to do with educating our kids. The amount of state dollars being sent to charters and privates will continue to grow as we further neglect our constitutional obligation to provide free and public education to every Texas child.

The consequences for failing under this system of intentional neglect are swift and punitive. In Houston, it took just one school out of 273 campuses with a bad rating for the state to replace the locally elected school board with TEA appointees. The takeover is expected to last until at least 2027. Since 2023, HISD has experienced plummeting enrollment, significant staff turnover, and strict adherence to teaching to the STAAR test—even at previously successful campuses. School libraries have been closed in exchange for discipline centers. Local goals and values have not been considered, **replaced instead with the priorities of unelected and unaccountable state appointees.**

Now, after being starved of funding necessary to satisfy state mandates and meet state accountability standards, four campuses in AISD have received unacceptable ratings and the district is facing TEA takeover. **To survive, our local leaders must act fast and with bold leadership—or risk similar circumstances suffered by HISD.**

I stand with our AISD leaders, from the board to administrators and staff, who are fighting to protect our schools and our values. They face difficult choices in the best interest of the whole system. Their consolidation plan will impact 96% of schools and is necessary to reverse past inequities and create consistent pathways to success for all students.

Our neighborhood schools survive only if every school succeeds. This is how we'll stay on our feet in this fight for our future. I will keep fighting right alongside you to ensure every child in Texas gets the education they are entitled to by law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SEK' followed by a large, sweeping flourish that extends to the right.

Sarah Eckhardt