



THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

The Honorable Molly Cook

State Senator, District 15

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Cook Votes Against SB 2, Vows to Continue Fighting for Texas Public Schools

Austin, TX –Today, after hours of debate, amendments, rigorous discussion, and unified demonstration by the Senate Democratic Caucus, the Texas Senate passed SB 2, legislation that fundamentally disrupts our public education system by establishing "education savings accounts" (ESAs) and spending hard-earned taxpayer dollars on private school tuition. While some amendments improved the bill's oversight and accountability measures, ultimately, the final version remains a deeply flawed program that, in practice, harms more Texas children than it helps. Senator Cook (D-Houston) offered the following statement:

“I voted no on Senate Bill 2 after hearing from students, parents, teachers, and staff across public, private, and homeschool communities in Senate District 15 who have expressed overwhelming concerns about this program's impact on our community. As much as Senate Democrats went to bat for our public school children, standing together with solutions, and fighting for accountability, this bill still passed, despite overwhelming opposition from the thousands of constituents we represent. Texans do not want their public education system dismantled.

“The devastating impact on neighborhood schools in Senate District 15 and across the state will further deepen the existing educational disparities that already affect our most vulnerable students. When we invest in opportunities that serve the most vulnerable, we serve everyone. Instead of addressing teacher shortages, outdated resources, and underfunded special education programs, this legislation forces our public schools to do more with less. I cannot support a program that compromises the opportunities and future for Texas children.”

Throughout the debate, Senator Cook worked to improve the bill's accountability measures, offering amendments to strengthen transparency and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly. Floor Amendment #25 would have required educational service providers and private schools participating in the ESA program to make their budgets public, just as public schools are required to do. Unfortunately, the amendment failed on a vote of 11-20.

Senator Cook also proposed Floor Amendment #30 to clarify in statute that any taxpayer money used to promote the ESA program would count toward the bill's existing 3% administrative

spending cap, preventing excessive or unaccounted-for marketing expenses. While this amendment was rejected by the bill's author and failed by the same margin, the author did provide verbal clarification on the record that marketing costs are included in the 3% spending cap.

“I appreciate Chairman Creighton's willingness and collaboration to incorporate a proposed requirement that private schools receiving state funds through this program must have a physical presence in Texas, even if they offer digital instruction. Additional accountability and oversight measures were needed to help keep Texas taxpayer dollars in Texas.

“As much as we fought to improve this bill, SB 2 remains fundamentally flawed. It is a misguided attempt at education reform that leaves public schools struggling, adds additional burdens on families, and prioritizes private interests over public good. I will continue advocating for our teachers, students, and families as SB 2 heads to the Texas House.”

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