

THE SENATE OF TEXAS

STATE CAPITOL, 3S.5
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711
(512) 463-0127

1210 W. INTERSTATE 2, STE. 10
PHARR, TEXAS 78577
(956) 787-5227



7 NORTH PARK PLAZA
BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS 78521
(956) 548-0227

700 FM 3168
RAYMONDVILLE, TEXAS 78580
(956) 689-1860, EXT. 230

SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

June 13, 2020

Mike Morath
Education Commissioner
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath:

As Vice Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, I write to you on behalf of our public school children who are unfortunately shouldering the consequences of the COVID-19 public health crisis. It is with a sense of urgency that I seek your help, as the Texas Education Commissioner, in ensuring public school districts have the necessary resources to provide the mental health services that our students need during these uncertain, challenging times.

Caring parents in my senate district are thankful for the guidance that you provided in assisting public schools overcome the unprecedented challenge that they faced during the 2020 School Year. As a former educator, I commend the outstanding results that the Region 1 public schools achieved in effectively helping South Texas students as they transitioned mid-semester to online learning. I join families in Senate District 27 in thanking you for your commitment to help our school districts during the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak; your deliberate involvement as our Education Commissioner was instrumental in our public students successfully completing the Spring 2020 Semester.

As our public school districts prepare for their fall re-opening, I respectfully seek your assistance in ensuring that the necessary mental health resources and support are available for our children. By no fault of their own, our children are facing unprecedented challenges and confronting stress levels that no one could have foreseen. Unfortunately, the corona virus has caused many of our constituents to lose their jobs, and millions are seeking critical unemployment assistance from our state. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a severe toll on our constituents who are experiencing a lack of financial security, increased food insecurity, and the loss of greatly needed employer-based health insurance. Many loving families across our state are feeling increased anxiety and stress which is worsened by daunting fears of housing instability. I hope that you agree that the frightening pressures that COVID-19 is causing to thousands of families and their innocent children require immediate, deliberate action from our state. That is why, as a public servant who is driven by the needs of children and families in my district, I respectfully ask for your careful and thoughtful consideration of the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our public school children.



DISTRICT 27: CAMERON ★ HIDALGO ★ KENEDY ★ KLEBERG ★ WILLACY

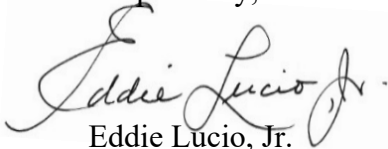
COMMITTEES: CHAIR, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS ★ VICE-CHAIR, EDUCATION ★ NATURAL RESOURCES & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ★
VETERAN AFFAIRS & MILITARY INSTALLATIONS ★ SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER SECURITY

I join Josette Saxton, Director of Mental Health Policy with Texans Care for Children (who I have worked with over the years in advocating for the mental health needs of our school children), and the 21 exceptional organizations who jointly have asked you to direct our school districts to prioritize the mental health needs of all students and staff. As public servants, I trust that we see eye-to-eye when I say that the unfathomable adversities that the public health crisis is causing on our families and their children require our state to respond in an extraordinary, comprehensive, Texas-sized manner. Along with guidance from your agency clearly outlining standards and outcome measures for our school districts, the best interest of our school children would also be greatly served by Texas making available to our public schools the means to help all students through the COVID-19 pandemic. For these reasons, as Senate Education vice chair, I respectfully ask you to strengthen Texas' effort to help our public schools by working with our governor in seeking state, federal, and private resources to assist our school districts. There is no doubt in my mind that your steadfast commitment to our school children will prove to be successful in addressing the critical help that is needed, especially by public schools that -- due to their low tax base -- lack the necessary resources to address the unprecedented social, emotional, and mental health adversities confronting their students.

Please rest assured that as Senate Education vice chair, and as a member of the Texas Senate Work Group on Public Schools, I am currently working on a series of legislative reforms for the 2021 Legislative Session to assist in this effort. During the upcoming legislative session, I am committed to working with Josette and Texans Care for Children in instituting a comprehensive revitalization of our Education Code to modernize the manner by which Texas assists our public schools in helping our children overcome these historic hardships. Since the 87th Legislature is more than six months away, and because our school children need immediate action by our state during the Fall Semester, I thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my aforementioned request. It is my hope that the matters discussed above will be helpful as you guide the Texas Education Agency in assisting our public school districts as they strive to prepare for the upcoming 2020-2021 School Year.

Commissioner, as always, I look forward to continuing to work with you on how Texas can strengthen its response in supporting our public school districts as they take every effort to help our public school students overcome the stress of the COVID-19 public health threat. Once again, I sincerely thank you for everything that you are doing to provide guidance and resources to our public schools so that every challenge that this public health crisis brings is met with an equally as strong Texas-sized solution. Our public school children require no less.

Respectfully,



Eddie Lucio, Jr.

State Senator, District 27

Vice-Chair, Texas Senate Education Committee

