

THE SENATE OF TEXAS

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SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

July 17, 2020

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath:

As school administrators across Texas plan for the upcoming school year, I seek your assistance to maximize our schools' limited resources to ensure all public school students have access to greatly needed school meals. With the best interest of the low-income families in my district, I respectfully request your leadership in having the Texas Education Agency work with the necessary federal, state, and local officials to provide school districts the necessary authority to use their school buses and associated personnel to deliver school meals to students in communities within their jurisdictions.

This past school year, several districts in the Rio Grande Valley (including Los Fresnos CISD and McAllen ISD) were successful in delivering meals to central points near students' homes. This was especially valuable to students in poorer areas, like our colonias, who did not have the needed transportation to pick up meals on campus. My districts inform me that mileage driven to deliver meals in this manner was, unfortunately, not reimbursable under the state's transportation allotment. Regrettably, our local innovative solution to overcome the challenges brought on by the coronavirus outbreak on low-income families significantly strained already-stretched budgets.

As the pandemic continues to ravage our local economies, I hope we can agree that Texas should encourage our schools to find forward-looking ways to provide essential meals to children of low-income families. Greatly improving the delivery of needed meals to low-income children by maximizing the use of existing resources, as demonstrated by our Valley districts, is a perfect example of leveraging the strengths of local schools and creatively addressing problems brought on by the pandemic. Accordingly, I respectfully request that our state encourage school districts to leverage their resources and personnel, like Los Fresnos CISD and McAllen ISD, to fulfill a critical function of our public school system. Otherwise, such resources would sit dormant and idle, regrettably, not be fully optimized.

As Texas' Education Commissioner, by granting school districts the necessary authority to address the transportation allotment reimbursable status of these limited resources, you will be greatly helping our schools



meet the needs of low-income families throughout our state amid COVID-19 surging through our communities. Please rest assured that districts in my region stand ready to adopt and further expand this beneficial model of school nutrition delivery. School administrators eagerly await the necessary authority and reimbursement waiver needed to help thousands of low-income children. It is my hope that with your leadership, our state will establish greater mobile feeding programs that harness existing district transportation systems and better meet the needs of low-income children in our public school system throughout Texas.

I thank you in advance, on behalf of the students and families that I represent in the Rio Grande Valley, for your careful consideration of this fiscally responsible solution, which is guided by the best interest of Texas' school children. As a long-time advocate for helping feed children in our Texas public schools, I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure every child in Texas' public school system has the means and resources necessary to learn. Together, with innovative solutions, we can help meet our constitutional and moral duty to educate and provide for all students under the state's public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Lucio, Jr." with a small flourish at the end.

Eddie Lucio, Jr.
State Senator, District 27

ELJ/cwl/de

cc: Governor Greg Abbott
Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker Dennis Bonnen
Chairman Larry Taylor
Chairman Dan Huberty
Members of the Senate Education Committee
Members of the House Public Education Committee

