

# THE SENATE OF TEXAS

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SENATOR  
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

November 6, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Morath:

As vice chair of the Senate Education Committee, I am thankful for all the help you have provided our schools as they face great uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided for an average daily attendance (ADA) hold-harmless for the spring of the 2019-2020 school year and the first twelve weeks of the current school year. Under your leadership, districts have not had to worry about wavering student attendance affecting their funding, granting them flexibility in their response to the health crisis. Since the pandemic continues to provide staggering challenges to our schools, I respectfully request extension of the ADA hold-harmless for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year in order to continue to provide Texas schools financial stability during these most perilous times.

Rio Grande Valley superintendents, whose schools serve some of the neediest students in Texas, report these students to be the most difficult to maintain contact with during the pandemic. Despite the admirable efforts of our school districts, many students from low-income neighborhoods attend school sporadically, whether in person or in a virtual setting. Regrettably, taking "snapshot attendance" on any given day—even though districts must maintain the personnel and infrastructure to educate these children—puts districts in precarious positions. Regrettably, basing district budgets on a potential undercount of students through the ADA calculation may force districts to forego the purchase of needed resources due to the likelihood of the state clawing back funds at the end of the year. TEA can readily avoid this unintended consequence by maintaining the ADA freeze under current calculations, which will benefit all districts in Texas by providing greater certainty in planning for the remainder of the school year.

Thank you for your careful attention to this important matter. With your help, Texas can provide school officials the financial stability they need to continue to provide children in our state the best education as Texas weathers the pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Lucio, Jr.".

Eddie Lucio, Jr.  
State Senator

cc:  
Governor Greg Abbott

