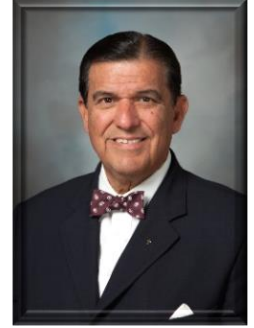




**STATE SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.
DISTRICT 27**



THE SENATE OF TEXAS
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Sen. Lucio Files Bills to Improve Counseling and Educator Training

Measures will increase schools' capacity to reach students affected by COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, November 12, 2020

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AUSTIN, TX – Today, Senate Education Vice Chairman Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) filed a package of bills that will increase the capacity of our schools and educators to address the educational, mental, and emotional needs of all Texas students.

"It is more important than ever that our teachers and counselors are prepared to help every student reach their goals," Sen. Lucio said. "We live in a complex world and children sometimes struggle to understand the world around them. From the trauma associated with school violence to COVID-19 and the interruption of important academic instruction, many students become challenged with emotional and academic setbacks when faced with adversity. It is vital to the future of our state that we help those students overcome these barriers and remain on track to become the next generation of Texas leaders."

School counseling programs are essential to the wellbeing of children, and it is important that these programs are sufficient to meet the needs of all students. To help increase the capacity of these programs, Senator Lucio filed two bills related to school counselors: SB 178, which provides for more school counselors by lowering the required student-to-counselor ratio; and SB 179, which requires districts to adopt policies that prioritize counselors' duties to students over administrative work.

"I have long been a supporter of school counselors, and as students cope with the extended time away from the classroom as a result of the current pandemic, these important educators will be needed more than ever before," Sen. Lucio stated. "SB 178 and SB 179, working together, will ensure counselors have the support they need to focus on improving student wellbeing."

Students requiring additional services such as special education students and bilingual education students also face academic challenges related to extended time away from the classroom. To help teachers effectively reach all students, Senator Lucio filed SB 180, which will boost educator training and professional development opportunities to help teachers meet the needs of every student in their classrooms.

"Every student brings their own unique needs to the classroom, and it is critical that we provide preparation for our educators to meet those needs - whether they be due to a disability, a language barrier, or any other reason," Lucio affirmed. "In the upcoming legislative session, I am confident Texas will make it a priority to ensure every school has the staff and expertise necessary to help students succeed and overcome the overwhelming challenges created by the pandemic. I look forward to working with my colleagues to uphold our promise of a high-quality education to every Texas student and to having these bills signed into law."

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Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D – Brownsville) represents Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Kleberg, and Willacy Counties. He is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education; Member of the Senate Committees on State Affairs; Veteran Affairs & Border Security; and of the Select Committees on Redistricting; and, Texas Ports. He is member of the Sunset Advisory Commission, DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Advisory Panel, and has been an ex-officio member of the DSHS Task Force of Border Public Health Officials since 2017. Elected in 1991, Lucio is third in seniority in the Texas Senate.