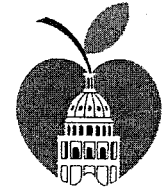


Austin Independent School District

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House Bill 709

by Representative Patrick Rose & Senator Kirk Watson

Relating to the award of stipends to nationally certified classroom teachers under the educator excellence awards program.

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Committee. I am David Lussier, Director of Strategic Compensation for the Austin Independent School District. I am also a National Board Certified Teacher. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for House Bill 709 today.

For a moment, imagine a process in which teachers would document how they plan, execute, assess, and modify their instruction, and how each of these choices results in improved student learning. Imagine a process in which teachers have to document how their professional development choices result in greater student learning. Imagine a process in which teachers must show how they connect to parents, families, and communities in ways that effectively support students to be successful. Imagine if the evidence that teachers provided in each of these areas was not measured against minimum standards, but against advanced standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Fortunately, we do not have to imagine such a process. It exists today in the form of National Board Certification, an advanced, voluntary certification process that nearly 74,000 teachers nationally, and 478 teachers here in Texas, have earned.

The Austin Independent School District is proud to lead the state with more National Board Certified teachers than any other district in Texas. Statewide, Austin ISD teachers comprised nearly half of all those certified in 2008. This number brought our total up to 170 educators who have been certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The number of National Board Certified Teachers in our District is not accidental. We encourage all our teachers to work toward National Board Certification during their careers. We also provide fee support as well as stipends from local funds of up to \$3,000 per year for those teachers receiving the certification.

Having National Board Certified teachers in our schools raises the teaching and learning capacity of those schools. It provides a level of teaching mastery that serves as a model for other teachers and raises the bar for teaching practice district-wide. We also tap our pool of National Board Certified Teachers in a variety of leadership roles to leverage their expertise after they have become certified.

We want our best teachers to remain in our classrooms. National Board Certification provides the extra recognition and reward that the best teachers often don't receive. This is the reason that teachers choose to work up to an additional 400 hours in a process that has a less than 40 percent pass rate for first time applicants. National Board Certification is an indicator that these teachers are the top professionals in their field in the nation. But don't just take my word for it. Look at the abundance of research affirming this fact, or better yet, spend some time in the classroom of a National Board Certified Teacher and you'll see first hand the quality of these outstanding teachers.

The majority of National Board Certified teachers should not be limited to Austin ISD. The bill before you today would allow districts to use funds that have already been allocated to reward and incentivize teachers to pursue National Board Certification. The use of the funds allowed under HB 709 is consistent with the purpose of the educator excellence award program and would serve to increase teacher quality across the state as a whole.

Thank you for giving me a chance to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.