

# Austin Independent School District

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## **Testimony to the Texas Senate Committee on Education On Senate Bill 688 by Senator Jeff Wentworth**

*Relating to the mitigation of the impact of residential development in public school districts*

**March 3, 2009**

Good morning Madam Chair, members of the Committee, and Senator Wentworth, my name is Robert Schneider, member of the Austin ISD Board of Trustees. I am here on behalf of TASB (and my district) to testify in support of Senate Bill 688.

As a trustee in a large school district for seven years, I have come to value the ability for a school district to anticipate and plan for growth. While not every section of our District is experiencing rapid growth, the area of the district that I represent is expanding at a rapid pace, and we are responsible for providing neighborhood schools for these new communities. Sometimes we do not learn about a proposed development in time to make all the necessary plans according to a schedule that allows for the best utilization of resources, and sometimes the land necessary to build a school in a certain neighborhood is not available to the district for purchase.

Senate Bill 688 would dramatically improve a district's ability to plan for the new developments that are approved and it would provide us with the ability to purchase the necessary property, at a fair market price, to construct a school that can educate the children in the new neighborhood.

While we support the legislation and certainly the intent behind it, one concern we might have is to ensure that this proposed law in no way limits a school district's ability to negotiate with a developer who may sell a certain piece of property at below market value due to their desire to have a school located in their particular development. I don't think that is the author's intent, but I wanted to raise that concern.

This legislation provides school districts with the ability to better carry out our mission of making quality educational opportunities available in a neighborhood school for all students.