



# TSTA NEWS

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## **TSTA: Gov. Abbott doesn't listen to educators; he bullies educators, families and legislators for vouchers**

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina made the following remarks today at an anti-voucher event hosted by the Texas Freedom Network at the Capitol:

If Gov. Abbott listened to educators — the real education experts — he would be demanding and ensuring that the Legislature substantially increase funding for our under-funded public schools, and he would demand and ensure that lawmakers provide raises for our under-paid teachers and school support staff...Period.

He wouldn't be trying to tie those necessities to vouchers.

But Abbott doesn't listen to educators. His actions thus far tell you that he doesn't listen to or respect Texas educators, our students or their families.

Instead, he listens to wealthy political contributors who want taxpayer-funded vouchers to benefit a limited number of families and enrich private school owners.

Instead of being a leader for public education, as the Texas Constitution requires, the governor bullies our public school educators, students and families and works for school privatization.

Under Abbott's watch, per-student funding of Texas public schools has fallen to more than \$4,000 below the national average. It now ranks 44th, very close to the bottom, of all the states. Average teacher pay in Texas has dropped to more than \$7,000 below the national average.

TSTA members told us in our most recent moonlighting survey that they are so underpaid that 41 percent of them must take second or third jobs during the school year to meet their families' needs, and 70 percent are seriously considering leaving the profession.

Abbott doesn't care. If he did, he'd prioritize public school funding.

Instead, the governor is holding a much-needed increase in public school funding hostage to vouchers.

Educators and Texas taxpayers can't afford vouchers. More importantly, neither can our students. The majority of them will remain in our public schools, which will become even more under-funded if vouchers become law.

The voucher bill, Senate Bill 1, approved by the Senate will cost taxpayers and public schools at least \$500 million over the first two years. Based on the experience of existing voucher states, that will increase to untold billions of dollars within a few years — and continue to increase — all with no accountability for how these tax dollars are spent. Private schools are not regulated by the state.

Now, the fight goes to the House. Historically and as recently as last spring, the House has killed voucher bills. The anti-voucher votes have been cast by House members of both parties who, unlike the governor, value their local public schools more than the greed of voucher promoters.

We recognize that many of these legislators are under intense pressure from the governor and his political contributors. We urge them to keep prioritizing our students and their futures. We urge them to keep listening to educators, not the governor, and keep putting their principles over politics and kill this latest voucher bill — to kill this latest attack against our public schools.

The future of our public schools — and the future of Texas — depend on them.