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October 21, 2021

The Honorable Louie Gohmert
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gohmert:

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas public educators since 1980. ATPE is the leading educator association in Texas, with approximately 100,000 members statewide, including over 1,800 members in your congressional district. As Congress continues to consider the Senate-passed bipartisan infrastructure bill (HR3684, the INVEST in America Act) and the larger package that includes portions of the Biden Administration's Build Back Better plan, we write to let you and your staff know ATPE's positions on some provisions in these bills that are important to Texas public educators, including support staff, and students they serve.

From the INVEST in America Act:

ATPE strongly supports provisions in the bipartisan Senate-passed bill that will allocate additional federal resources to schools to upgrade their facilities and equipment to meet the challenges of educating students in the 21st century. We are encouraged that the bill includes funding for schools to expand access to broadband, improve their facilities' air quality, and modernize school buses—issues that have had a disproportionate impact on low-income communities. Specifically, ATPE supports language in the bill to provide:

- **School Improvements:** The measure would authorize \$500 million over five years for a grant program for schools to make improvements that reduce energy costs, improve health and indoor air quality, or involve renewable energy technologies or alternative fueled vehicles.
- **Connectivity Grants:** The bill would authorize \$42.5 billion for a Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program within the Commerce Department that would provide grants to increase connectivity to underserved and high-cost areas.
- **Emergency Appropriations:** Amounts set aside for specified activities for fiscal 2022 through 2026 would include \$5 billion for clean and zero-emission school buses.
- **Clean School Buses and Ferries:** The measure would authorize \$5 billion over five years for the Environmental Protection Agency to award grants and rebates to replace school buses with zero-emission buses or EPA-certified buses that

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reduce emissions and use alternative fuels. Grant recipients would include state and local government agencies, contractors, or nonprofit school transportation associations. The EPA would prioritize applicants from school districts that serve a high percentage of children from low-income families.

From the Build Back Better Plan:

ATPE strongly supports provisions in the Biden Administration’s Build Back Better “human infrastructure” legislation being negotiated in Congress that focus federal resources on early childhood development and support public educators and other employees with additional paid leave after the birth of a child or for their own or a family member’s serious illness. We strongly support the President’s proposal to extend paid leave to 12 weeks and are concerned that the congressional leadership is considering reducing this proposal to four weeks. We ask that you weigh in with leaders in both parties in support of the full 12-week proposal from the Administration. Additionally, we ask for your support for the following provisions to be retained in the final package:

- **Universal Pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds and child care for working families.** The bill proposes spending about \$450 billion to fully pay for preschool for these children and subsidize child care on a sliding scale, capping expenditures for middle-class families at 7% of annual income.
- **School infrastructure, student success grants, and educator investments,** such as scholarships for future teachers, teaching residency programs, and mentoring.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of ATPE’s positions on these key federal education policy issues. Please use ATPE as a resource, and should you have any questions, please reach out to our federal governmental relations consultant David Pore at dpore@hslawmail.com.

Sincerely,



Shannon Holmes, Ed.D.
Executive Director