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State's largest educator association reacts to Gov. Greg Abbott's State of the State Address

ATPE agrees raising teacher pay is an emergency item—but rather than denigrating “government-mandated” schools, the governor should focus on serving the more than 5.5 million students proudly served by Texas public schools

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)**—the largest public educator organization in Texas—releases this statement from **Executive Director Shannon Holmes**:

“What Gov. Abbott says, at face value, sounds right. Every Texas student should have the opportunity to receive the best education for their needs. But the problem lies in the governor’s approach.

“Does it make sense to create an entirely separate system to fund private schools, one that will cost up to \$8 billion each year, when we haven’t updated our public school funding formulas to account for inflation since 2019? Won’t the new system just reduce the amount of funding available for the public schools the state is constitutionally obligated to provide? Or the funding available to attract, retain, and support dedicated educators with higher salaries, which the governor rightfully identifies as an emergency?

“Does it help students in rural areas to give them a voucher to attend a private school when the nearest accredited private school is hundreds of miles away?

“Does it help students who need special education services? After all, a private school can turn away any student it doesn’t want to serve, whereas public schools are legally required to provide services to every student, regardless of academic or athletic ability and no matter what special needs they have. Of course, the State of Texas—the state Gov. Abbott has led for a decade now—has a documented history of underfunding special education.

“We call on Gov. Abbott to leave the cozy confines of the private schools where he has been touting school choice for the past three years and visit public schools across the state. From our most urban schools in Dallas and Houston to the farthest reaches of the Panhandle, he will find students who deserve the opportunity to receive the best education for their needs. That starts with appropriately funding their public schools, which have and will continue to serve the vast majority of Texas children.

“Public school funding, not a lack of parental choice, is the real emergency when it comes to education in Texas.”

For more information about ATPE Governmental Relations, please visit atpe.org/txlege.

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About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

Founded in 1980, ATPE is the leading educators’ association in Texas with nearly 80,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, and future, retired, and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for Texas’ more than five million public school students. | atpe.org