



Representative Dan Huberty



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100 Days into Session Update

Over the last several months my staff and I have spent a great deal of time fielding your calls, and working to find solutions to our potential revenue deficits to fund all our needs. While we all have been focused on education, there are many other programs that are being impacted by the revenue shortfall we are experiencing. We appreciate the opportunity to visit with anyone who calls, or visits our office in the Capitol. We have tried to be as accessible as possible, and will do everything we can to make ourselves available to answer your questions. While I would like to have a magic wand and make the revenues reappear in this next budget at the State level, we know through hours of committee meetings and debate on the floor that we are unable to fully fund every program. However, we have allocated 56% of every dollar at the State Level to education, and while it will never be enough to satisfy everyone, we are allocating the majority of our total revenues on education.

I thought it would be important to update everyone on where we are as of the 100th day of the legislative session. First of all, I appreciate the time that Dr. Sconzo has spent with me during the last few months. He has made numerous trips to Austin to assist us in the process and our work is paying off. He has been a great sounding block for me, and has supported the actions I have taken on behalf of our community. I feel it is critical to understand how the bills I vote for will affect our community, and Dr. Sconzo has been instrumental in telling Humble ISD's story to my colleagues.

Recently, we have considered one very important issue that I know you will find interesting. Chairman Scott Hochberg has introduced a new school finance bill that would bode very well for the State of Texas, and Humble ISD. We voted that bill out of the Public Education committee this week and sent it to the General Calendar committee with the hope that it be on the House floor for debate soon.

Also, I feel it is important to update you on House Bill 400. There is some misinformation about this piece of legislation being circulated by interested parties. House Bill 400 focuses resources on the classroom by allowing school districts to effectively and efficiently manage their operations.

(Please see the rest of this letter continued on the next page).

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100 Days into Session Update, cont.

Instead of a one size fits all salary schedule, this bill allows a local district and teachers to work to find compensation structure that works for all involved. This bill is being supported by the school districts, school boards, and superintendants. In addition, the day we took testimony, we had multiple teachers show up and support the bill, stating that they want to have the ability to participate in the process and find ways to help save jobs. I have spent countless hours listening to different groups' concerns, and have worked with the author to make changes that are reasonable for all parties. The bill provides flexibility for school districts on furloughs instead of layoffs, saving jobs; this bill allows for a reduction in force hearing to be conducted by a superintendent designee instead of an independent hearing officer which will help save money and jobs; the bill makes class size stay at 22:1 for K-4th grade, but allows the Superintendent more flexibility in asking for waivers, with a cap of no more than 24 kids in any class in K-4th grade. Many of the provisions provide flexibility for a school district to run like a business, like waiving the provision for "Last In- First Out" for hires. This will allow us to keep the best and brightest of teachers, while ensuring that long-term teachers are also given the proper respect and courtesy. While some of the discussions have been spirited, I believe we will vote a solid bill out of the house that protects the students, teachers and the schools. I have seen the emails from the various groups vilifying what we are doing in Austin, it certainly is disappointing that they chose to take that approach, especially in light of the fact that I have worked so diligently to solve our local problems, while being mindful of the impact these bills have on the State.

It is also important to touch on House Bill 500. This important piece of legislation won't delay the implementation of the new STAAR assessment tests, however it will allow students a transition period for the new end-of-course exams for two years, similar to the transition period that districts have with accountability measures. It will also help to establish clear graduation requirements for students by eliminating the confusing and complicated set of graduation requirements while maintaining options for students. HB 500 returns local control to educators and save resources by allowing districts to decide if end-of-course assessment results will be included in the student's grade instead of the state mandating a certain percentage.

I want you to remember that my goal when I came to Austin was to protect our district and community and provide all our children, including mine with the best possible education as possible. Based on what I think will happen with school finance, I am confident we have done a good job telling our story and making the right decisions to help our community. While we still have a month left to go, things are still improving and we will have a chance to increase funding for all categories in the budget. We agreed to spend \$3.1 billion out of the Rainy Day Fund to pay for this year's expenses, adding \$2 billion into education for this year, the commissioner accepted the \$830 million in Federal EduJobs money for public education in the next year, and we have agreed to defer one payment from the permanent school fund from August to September adding \$1.8 billion into education for the next biennium. Finally, we are looking for additional revenue streams that we can use for other purposes.

I appreciate your continued support while I serve you here in Austin and look forward to being with you back in the district after the legislative session adjourns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at my Capitol office.

Sincerely,



State Representative -District 127