



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Texas House Announces Texas Retirement Fund Preservation Package**  
- Weekly Legislative Update 3/15/19 -

(Austin, TX) - Speaker of the House Dennis Bonnen, State Representative Greg Bonnen, and the members of the Texas House unveiled their legislative plan to safeguard the Texas teacher retirement programs. With the current projected payoff period of 87 years, the Teacher Retirement System Pension Trust Fund is not actuarially sound. If left unaddressed, this system will never be able to fully pay its obligations. The Legislature is working to remedy this with not just a quick fix, but a long-term solution that ensures stability for our educators.

House Bill 9 by Rep. Bonnen will address the issue by increasing the state contribution to the TRS Pension Trust Fund from 6.8% to 8.8% of the statewide teacher salary cost. This increase would occur over the next five years and would account for a 29.4% increase in the state funding level. This increase will allow for the fund to be sound within the 2020-2021 biennium.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>State Contribution Increases to:</b>
FY 2020	6.8%
FY 2021	7.8%
FY 2022	8.05%
FY 2023	8.3%
FY 2024	8.55%
FY 2025	8.8%

HB 9 also authorizes a supplemental payment or "13th Check" in the 2020-2021 biennium to members who retired prior to 2017, providing general supplemental payment of up to \$2,400 or the retirees' regular annuity payment. Teachers investing in retirement today deserve to have confidence that their benefits will still exist in the future. With HB 9, we will place more money in the pockets of our retired teachers and ensure future generations will have a sustainable pension plan.

This week I had the privilege to lay out quite a few of the bills I have filed this session:

- HB 114: Veterans, military service members, and students going into the military are sometimes unaware of the availability of college credit awarded for military experience,



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education, and training obtained during military service. This bill seeks to facilitate greater communication between high school counselors and community colleges, TWC, apprenticeship programs in the area, and military recruiters so that they can identify students who are enlisted to join the armed services and provide students with information of how their military service can translate into college credit upon returning to civilian life.

- **HB 465:** Individuals charged with or convicted of certain offenses are required to pay various fines, fees, and costs that create an undue hardship on individuals lacking the means necessary to pay. This bill seeks to address this hardship by enabling a defendant to request a hearing to determine if the financial costs may be waived or satisfied through alternative means. The court will hold a hearing to reconsider the cost of the fine and may consider the defendant's work responsibilities, transportation limitations, housing insecurity, dependent care, disability status, or other information the court finds relevant. Furthermore, the judge may decide to waive or uphold a fee without holding a hearing if they can determine whether or not an undue hardship exists without a hearing. This bill also will prevent a municipality from imposing additional fines after the defendant's indigence has been established and eliminate the automatic issuing of a warrant and the subsequent doubling of the defendant's bail upon their failure to appear for a hearing.
- **HB 566:** The criminal history of individuals charged with multiple offenses during the same criminal episode contains the records of charges that were acquitted or dismissed. In addition, offenses that result in a charge being re-filed, reduced, or enhanced often receive a new case number at each re-filing and the extraneous case numbers often remain on the individual's criminal history. The disclosure of these charges that do not result in conviction lead to the perception that an individual may have a more extensive criminal record than is accurate. The bill creates a procedure in which these charges can be sealed from a person's record.
- **HB 691:** Texas Government Code allows only for the sealing of one misdemeanor conviction during the lifetime of an individual. The disclosure of criminal history can significantly impact an individual's ability to obtain employment, housing, or otherwise become a productive member of society. The bill eliminates the section of the Texas Government Code pertaining to the eligibility of certain criminal defendants for an order of nondisclosure of criminal history that stipulates that an individual has not been previously convicted or adjudicated of an offense.
- **HB 1278:** Freestanding emergency care facilities, which are facilities defined as being separate and distinct from a hospital, provide crucial emergency care to patients suffering from severe illnesses and injuries. Under current statute, freestanding emergency care



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facilities are not able to provide outpatient acute care service, which includes services that do not require overnight stays. This legislation would help rural Texans have access to quality outpatient care that may actually be a more accessible choice for them than a hospital.

- HB 692: Homeless youth are some of the most vulnerable members of society, yet they tend to be disciplined at disproportionate rates as compared to their non-homeless peers. Homeless youth experience unique barriers to success in the classroom, including a lack of stable housing and support from caring adults; limited access to basic necessities like food and medical services; a lack of consistent access to bathing and laundry facilities; unreliable transportation; and histories of trauma and abuse. As such, our schools should take into account a student's homeless-status when disciplinary action is deemed necessary and should not use out-of-school suspension (OSS) if the student has been identified as experiencing homelessness. This bill asks school districts to place homeless students in in-school suspension rather than out of school suspension and would allow for schools to consider how a student's homelessness contributed to the disciplinary infraction that warranted the suspension.
- HB 811: On the same note and background of HB 692. This bill asks school districts to consider a student's status as a foster or homeless youth when discerning the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken.
- HB 507: This bill seeks to create a task force comprised of members from state agencies to develop comprehensive, statewide practices for engaging parents as their children's first and best teachers; and to enhance coordination of parent engagement and evidence-based parent education programs across state agencies.
- HB 812: Justice-involved individuals confined to facilities other than halfway houses who initiate a visit to a healthcare provider are required to pay a healthcare service fee of \$100. This fee may place an unnecessary financial burden on them and may dissuade them from seeking appropriate medical attention. This bill seeks to reduce the healthcare service fee to back to the historic \$3 to better enable justice-involved individuals to seek medical attention.
- HB 1653: Currently, the thousands of Texans in state jails have extremely limited access to treatment or programs and usually lack post-release supervision. As a result, state jails have the worst recidivism rate of all correctional institutions in the state of Texas. This bill seeks to address the growing issue in state jails by establishing a program to provide funding to community-based nonprofit organizations that provide reentry and reintegration services to defendants released from state jail facilities. In addition, the bill will enable divisions to fund departments, municipalities, or counties operating a pretrial



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intervention program on a per capita basis, while also requiring the department to develop minimum standards for the operation of pretrial intervention programs funded through the division.

Lastly, this week I had the privilege of welcoming Jeana Culp, Dean Culp, and Chase Culp, our longest serving Texas House honorary page, to their Texas Capitol. This year Chase opted to work a full day in office by shadowing my legislative staff in their roles. I hope the experience proved to be a truly educational one that provided him further insight into the legislative process and the constituent services we provide on a daily basis. Dean had the opportunity to serve as an Honorary Page for the first time. The program is one that provides young students with the opportunity to see the inner-workings of the House and sometimes the pages are able to be on the House Floor during the legislative session. I always encourage students to reach out to my office should they wish to participate in this remarkable program.

The Capitol of Texas belongs to you and visiting the Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490. Or, you can email him at [saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov](mailto:saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov).

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