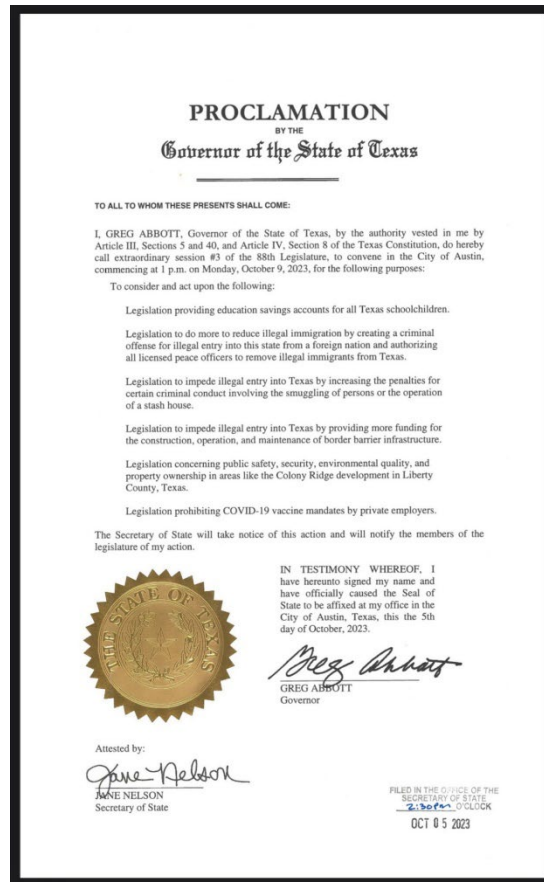


Lalani's Legislative Letter

Interim Edition #5

Greetings!

This week we find ourselves back in Austin to serve in a Third Special Legislative Session called by Governor Abbott. This session will have a focus on items that address School Vouchers, Border Security and COVID-19 Mandates. In this issue, I am sharing a report researched and authored by the [Texas Legislative Study Group](#) on School Vouchers.




Remember this is your District. You are the most important part of what happens here. Get engaged, get involved, help make your community a better place for all.

**Blessings,
Representative Suleman Lalani, M.D**

Texas Legislative Study Group Report

Funding Schools, Not Vouchers, is the key to Student Success



Texas Legislative Study Group
An Official Caucus of the Texas House of Representatives

Representative: _____ **Decks:** _____

Funding Schools, Not Vouchers, is the key to Student Success

Dear Members, October 9, 2023

With a \$32 billion surplus going into the 88th Texas Legislature, most educators and legislators saw the session as a long-overdue opportunity to make a genuine investment in our 5.4 million Texas public school students.

The House had a chance to pass a bill that would have provided additional per-pupil funding, but voucher proponents derided the bill. Rather than compromise our neighborhood schools, the Texas House stood firm against vouchers, voting against them twice.

Whether they are called vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax credit scholarships, they undermine our public school system, cost taxpayers more money with zero accountability or transparency, and deepen inequities. To add insult to injury, numerous credible studies have found that voucher programs do not improve student outcomes.

Public money belongs in public schools.

Signed,
Rep. Armando Walle – Chair, Texas Legislative Study Group

We must hold the line against vouchers. Here's why:

Vouchers Haven't Improved Student Achievement

We want the best for our Texas students – but vouchers are not the answer. Even with different voucher programs, states, student populations, and varying methodologies, studies examining the effectiveness of vouchers on student achievement show that they have either comparable or worse student outcomes than public schools.

- A 2019 study by the University of Arkansas found that Louisiana students using vouchers to attend private schools "performed noticeably worse on state assessments than their [public school] control group counterparts after four years."
- A 2019 Institute for Education Sciences study found that the Washington, D.C. voucher program had no statistically significant effect on student achievement in reading or math after three years.
- A 2018 evaluation by the University of Alabama found that Alabama's voucher program was not associated with significant improvement on standardized test scores.
- A 2018 University of California Civil Rights Project study found that students in Indiana's voucher program lost an average of 9.4 percentile points in math compared to their public school counterparts. After four years in private schools, voucher students showed improvement but only performed equally to public school students.
- A 2017 Brookings Institution report examined voucher programs in the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio, and found that, on average, students attending private schools with vouchers did less well on tests than their peers in public schools.
- A 2017 Economic Policy Institute study analyzed 25 years of voucher research and found that voucher programs do not significantly improve test scores.

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- A [Disruption Insight poll](#) for the Texas Association of School Boards, reveals a downward trend in support for vouchers. When asked about using public taxpayer dollars for private or religious schools, only 32% of respondents said that vouchers are important, the lowest-ranking issue in the poll.

Billionaires — not Texans — are pushing the voucher scam.

- West Texas "pro-voucher" billionaires Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks have provided millions in political contributions to Gov. Abbott and Lt. Gov. Patrick, as well as other "conservative" organizations and PACs.
- Dunn and Wilks are wielding their political influence to attempt to [replace Texas public schools with a taxpayer-funded system of Christian-based private schools](#).
- Michael Quinn Sullivan of Empower Texans, an organization funded by Dunn and Wilks, showcased the pro-voucher movement's disregard towards educators when he said, "A reminder that public education is just a *hobbying service* offered at the convenience of the government employees. Public education in Texas is about employing otherwise unemployable adults, not educating kids."

Students give up federal and state protections against discrimination when accepting vouchers.

- Early vouchers were explicitly discriminatory — they emerged as a tool to combat public school integration after the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*. [Southern states adopted vouchers](#) to allow white students to leave desegregated public schools.
- Even today, some [data](#) suggests that voucher programs exacerbate racial segregation.
- Private schools do not have to follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that protect students with disabilities. Federal disability funding is not available to private schools.
- Private schools do not have to comply with other federal anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ students and students in other vulnerable groups, such as English language learners.

A Second Chance to Work Together for Public Education

Although additional per-pupil funding was not available at the start of the current school year, the state budget includes roughly \$4.5 billion of dedicated public education funding. On top of that, there is \$18.2 billion of unspent general revenue, of which several billion can be spent without busting the lowest spending limit.

Instead of engaging in culture wars, the special session provides the legislature an opportunity to work together on behalf of students, teachers, and parents in support of public schools that serve as the core of communities large and small in every part of our great state. We must use any and all available funds to invest in our neighborhood schools.

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Vouchers will divert funds from public schools. In states with vouchers costs ballooned while per-pupil funding dropped.

- A [report by Public Funds Public Schools](#), a Southern Poverty Law Center project, looked at seven states with long-standing voucher programs from fiscal years 2008 to 2019.
- All seven states saw substantial increases in voucher program funding, while, at the same time, its states decreased or froze per-pupil funding in public schools, even as enrollment increased.

State	Voucher Program Funding Change	Per-Pupil Spending for Public Education Change
Arizona	270 percent increase in voucher program funding.	5.7 percent decrease in per-pupil spending for public education
Florida	315 percent increase in voucher program funding.	12 percent decrease in per-pupil spending for public education
Georgia	883 percent increase in voucher program funding.	1.9 percent decrease in per-pupil spending for public education
Indiana	796 percent increase in voucher program funding.	1.5 percent decrease in per-pupil spending for public education
Louisiana	154 percent increase in voucher program funding.	6.3 percent decrease in per-pupil spending for public education
Wisconsin	119 percent increase in voucher program funding.	Froze per-pupil spending for public education
Ohio	The only state to buck the trend with increased funding for its voucher program by 416 percent and increased per-pupil spending for public education by 14.2 percent.	

- One of the reasons why voucher programs balloon state budgets are because they are entirely new costs to the state. The students using vouchers often were not attending public school beforehand; therefore, there are no existing state funds to "follow the student."

Vouchers would force taxpayers in many Texas communities to pay for a program they can't use and subsidize private tuition for families that can already afford it.

- The national average tuition for private schools is [over \\$12,000](#), and this doesn't include other costs such as transportation or meals.
- Rural communities often don't have [enough private schools around](#) for so-called "school choice" programs to work.
- Urban areas are also known to suffer from "[choice deserts](#)."

Texans aren't asking for vouchers.

- Texans already have a lot of "school choice," and school choice supporters are not all voucher supporters.
- Consider all the choices available now: open-enrollment public schools, early college high schools, STEM programs, career and technical programs, charter schools, and more.
- Voters appear to support their current choices. Nearly 90% of Texas parents said they were content with the state's public school system, according to the [Charter Batt. Foundation 2023 Texas Education Poll](#).
- 89% percent of Texas parents also support increased state funding for K-12 public schools.

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Third Special Legislative Session

In order to provide you information on the Third Special Legislative Session, I am attaching information on the bills moving through the chambers to address the Governor's issues:

School Vouchers Educational Spending Accounts		
Bill Number	Caption	Status
SB 1	Relating to the establishment of an education savings account program	Passed the Senate Referred to the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment
SB 2	Relating to a local optional teacher designation system implemented by a school district, a security officer employed by a school district, the basic allotment and guaranteed yield under the public school finance system, and certain allotments under the Foundation School Program; making an appropriation.	Passed the Senate
Border Security		
Bill Number	Caption	Status
SB 4	Relating to the punishment for certain criminal conduct involving the smuggling of persons or the operation of a stash house; increasing criminal penalties.	Passed the Senate Left pending in the House State Affairs Committee on 10/16/2023
SB 11	Relating to the creation of the criminal offense of improper entry from a foreign nation.	Passed the Senate Left pending in the House State Affairs Committee on 10/16/2023
HB 5	Relating to the punishment for certain criminal conduct involving the smuggling of persons or the operation of a stash house; increasing criminal penalties.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 11	Relating to the procedure following the apprehension of an undocumented individual by the Department of Public Safety for illegal entry into this state from Mexico during certain declared disasters; creating a criminal offense.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 14	Relating to the punishment for the criminal offense of operation of a stash house; increasing a criminal penalty.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 23	Relating to the creation of the criminal offense of improper entry from a foreign nation.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 114	Relating to creation of the criminal offense of improper entry from foreign nation.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 117	Relating to the punishment for the criminal offense of operation of a stash house; increasing a criminal penalty.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 83	Relating to the punishment for certain criminal conduct involving the smuggling of persons or the operation of a stash house; increasing criminal penalties.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee
HB 6	Relating to making an appropriation for the construction, operation, and maintenance of border barrier infrastructure.	Referred to the House Appropriations Committee Scheduled for hearing in the House Appropriations Committee on 10/23/2023
COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates		
Bill Number	Caption	Status
SB 7	Relating to prohibiting a private employer from adopting or enforcing certain COVID-19 vaccine mandates; authorizing an administrative penalty.	Passed the Senate Left pending in the House State Affairs Committee on 10/16/2023
HB 7	Relating to prohibiting a private employer from adopting or enforcing certain COVID-19 vaccine mandates; authorizing an administrative penalty.	Referred to the House State Affairs Committee

For more information on any of the legislation filed during the 3rd Special Legislative Session, please follow this [link](#).

Capitol Happenings

I am always humbled to receive the accolades of organizations for my legislative work in the Capitol.

Today, I am highlighting my being named a [Raise your Hand Texas Public Education Champion](#). Public education has been a priority for my office. I am a proponent of fully funding public education and an opponent of the current voucher scam. I am honored to receive this recognition and will continue to advocate for teachers and students during my tenure.



Below is an excerpt from the Raise Your Hand announcement of the recipients of their Champion Award

"Throughout the 88th Legislative Session, 100 legislators stood alongside Raise Your Hand Texas, fighting for the needs of Texas' 5.4 million public school students. We are recognizing them for their outstanding achievement and steadfast commitment to Texas public education.

These 100 individuals rose to the occasion during the 88th Legislative Session and made decisions that were the very best for their communities and their schools. They did the right thing throughout the Session, keeping constituents at the forefront of their public education decisions and supporting the desires of their local families, educators, and the future workforces of their communities.

They continued to stay strong and denounce vouchers, even when out-of-state interests tried to convince some state leaders that vouchers (aka education savings accounts) should be their number one priority for education this Session – despite the well-established need to address school safety, teacher salaries, and rising costs due to inflation. Saying no to vouchers is fundamental to protecting and preserving an education system that is committed to each and every student.

The recipients of the Public Education Champion Award withstood intense political pressure in order to do right by families, schools, and communities, and took votes to prevent vouchers in Texas.

Working in the legislature can often be a thankless job. The Raise Your Hand Texas **Public Education Champion Award** recognizes legislators who went above and beyond for their public schools during the 88th Session. We believe this award validates their work."

Lalani Legislation Spotlight*

One of my goals during the 88th legislative session was strengthening healthcare for Texans. Part of that is taking care of those who take care of Texans — healthcare workers.

I was proud to work with members in both chambers, on both sides of the aisle, to keep our healthcare workers safe by sponsoring [SB 840](#), and joint authoring its House companion bill, [HB 3548](#), which increase the penalty for assaulting on-duty hospital personnel to a 3rd degree felony. I also amended SB 840, with language from my [HB 4762](#), to apply to all property the hospital workers owns or leases, including parking garages and walkways.

Assaults against healthcare professionals are on the rise. Among those experiencing such incidents, 85% reported consequences such as loss of productivity, increased anxiety, and emotional trauma. This has a very real impact on their performance. By keeping our healthcare workers safe, we let them focus on their most important responsibility, keeping Texans healthy.

Thank you to the [Texas Hospital Association](#) and the [Texas Nurses Association](#) for your advocacy and support.

“ I am proud to help keep our healthcare workers safe by sponsoring SB 840, and joint authoring its House companion bill, HB 3548, which increases the penalty for assaulting on-duty hospital personnel to a 3rd degree felony. I also amended SB 840, with language from my HB 4762, to apply to all property the hospital workers owns or leases, including parking garages and walkways.

REPRESENTATIVE SULEMAN LALANI, M.D.
HOUSE DISTRICT 76

SB 840 TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES **Effective 9/1/2023**
Dr. Suleman Lalani
State Representative, District 76

“Workplace violence is unacceptable in any setting. However, health care workers, who risk their lives to heal others, should receive special protection under the law. Senate Bill 840 by Sen. Royce West increases the penalty for assault against hospital workers. The Texas Hospital Association values this important legislation and is grateful for an amendment offered by Rep. Suleman Lalani, M.D. and Rep. Rafael Anchía that provides the protections to health care personnel working on any property owned or leased by a hospital.”
- The Texas Hospital Association

“This is a long-awaited change from earlier legislation that applied this protection only to nurses working in the emergency department. Now, all nurses and healthcare workers have the support to hold those who assault them fully accountable under the law. Thanks to Rep. Lalani, these protections extend throughout hospital campuses, including parking lots or other on campus sites that present risks to healthcare workers as they leave the hospital.”
-Serena Bumpus, CEO of the Texas Nurses Association

If you want to read about any of my legislation, please go to my House [website](#).

****If this or any other legislation, issue or policy interests you, please get engaged! If you need ideas on how to get engaged, please contact us at District76.Lalani@house.texas.gov. We can help!***

The Job Link

Moving forward the **Lalani Legislative Letter** will contain **"The Job Link"** section. This is intended to give HD 76 access to employment opportunities. In this first edition, we are sharing links to local organizations that offer workforce training, development and employment opportunities.

Kindred Hospital Walk-in Job Fair

October 25, 2023, 10am – 8pm

Kindred Hospit Houston Sugar Land

1550 First Colony Blvd., Sugar Land TX 77479

For more information, please go to [Kindred Hospital Walk-in Job Fair](#).

UH at Sugar Land Career Fair – for UH students only

October 26, 2023, 5pm – 7pm

Brazos Hall, Room 103 A and B, UH at Sugar Land

For more information, please go to [UH at Sugar Land Career Fair](#).

If you are an employer and want to share hiring information, please reach out to our office at District76.Lalani@house.texas.gov and use the subject line "District Employment Opportunity" and we will share it in our newsletter.

Out and About in HD 76

16th Annual State of the Schools October 11, 2023



Public Officials & Awards Reception West Houston Association October 11, 2023



How to Reach Us



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