



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

Diego M. Bernal

State Representative, District 123

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Mike Morath
Commissioner, Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

Commissioner Morath:

We are writing to request the Texas Education Agency create a formal mechanism for students and families to opt-out of the 2020-2021 administration of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams. A summary of student enrollment trends published by the Agency indicates that 46%—or 2,463,481 students—are engaged in online instruction. These students and their families are choosing virtual learning for a variety of reasons including, but certainly not limited to, protecting the health, well-being, and safety of themselves or family members.

Since March 2020, there has been and continues to be some degree of remote instruction for students across the State which allows districts to mitigate the transmission of coronavirus in our schools. Through the waiver of the Student Success Initiative for fifth and eighth grade students and the pause of the A-F Accountability system, the Agency has sought to balance the impacts of COVID-19 induced learning loss with the health and safety of students and educators.

Data reported to the Texas Department of State Health Services indicates that with only 54% of students present on-campus, 104,365 students and 58,358 school staff members have been infected with coronavirus. These weekly numbers have continued to rise, tracking the rising trend of coronavirus transmission in our communities. Requiring that all students be in-person for the administration of exams creates an untenable environment that puts students and school personnel at immense risk of transmission. Since it is evident that the Agency has no plans to seek the federal waivers necessary to cancel the 2020-2021 administration of the STAAR, something we strongly believe the Agency should reconsider, at a minimum it should allow students and their families the opportunity to opt-out of the exam.

We appreciate your time on this matter. As always, our offices stand ready to assist you in any manner you deem necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diego M. Bernal".

Representative Diego M. Bernal
House District 123



Representative Alma Allen
House District 131



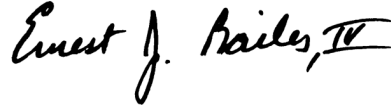
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House District 121



Representative Rafael Anchia
House District 103



Representative Trent Ashby
House District 57



Representative Ernest Bailes
House District 18



Representative Michelle Beckley
House District 65



Representative Rhetta Andrews Bowers
House District 113



Representative John Bucy III
House District 136



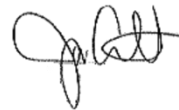
Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Campos
House District 119



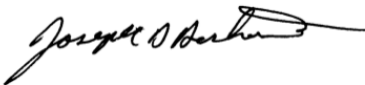
Representative Terry Canales
House District 40



Representative Philip Cortez, Ph.D.
House District 117



Representative Jasmine Crockett
House District 100



Representative Joe Deshotel
House District 22



Representative Harold V. Dutton, Jr.
House District 142



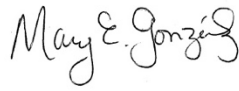
Representative Art Fierro
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Representative Barbara Gervin-Hawkins
House District 120



Representative Jessica González
House District 104



Representative Mary González, Ph.D.
House District 75



Representative Vikki Goodwin
House District 47



Representative R. D. "Bobby" Guerra
House District 41



Representative Ryan Guillen
House District 31



Representative Sam Harless
House District 126



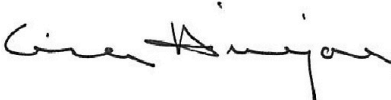
Representative Cody Harris
House District 8



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Representative Ray Lopez
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Representative Eddie Lucio III
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Representative Armando "Mando" Martinez
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Representative Morgan Meyer
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Representative Terry Meza
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Representative Ina Minjarez
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Representative Sergio Muñoz, Jr.
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House District 77

Representative Leo Pacheco
House District 118

Representative Mary Ann Perez
House District 144


Representative Ana-Maria Ramos
House District 102

Representative Richard Peña Raymond
House District 42

Representative Ron Reynolds
House District 27



Representative Eddie Rodriguez
House District 51



Representative Ramon Romero, Jr.
House District 90



Representative Toni Rose
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Representative Jon Rosenthal
House District 135



Representative Carl Sherman
House District 109



Representative Hugh D. Shine
House District 55



Representative James Talarico
House District 52



Representative Shawn Thierry
House District 146



Representative Senfronia Thompson
House District 141



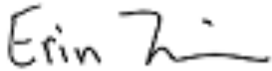
Representative Chris Turner
House District 101



Representative Armando Walle
House District 140



Representative Gene Wu
House District 137



Representative Erin Zwiener
House District 45