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Patrick Statement on the Texas House Killing School Choice

HOUSTON, TX – Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick released the following statement:

“Some members who voted against school choice attended private schools themselves or send their kids or grandkids to private schools. Now, they are denying that right to their constituents. If every House Republican or Democrat who has used private schools voted for school choice, it may have passed.

“Speaker Dade Phelan didn’t help either. Phelan abstained from voting on school choice. **Talk about a lack of leadership.** It's hard to pass school choice when the Speaker is too cowardly to vote for it himself.

The Truth About Education Funding

“I keep hearing from many in the education system, teachers' associations, the media, and those who oppose parental choice that we greatly underfund public education, and that school choice would take money away from public education. Neither of those statements are true.

“Texas spends about 50% of our entire state budget on public and higher education. That's one out of every two dollars. We spend about 30% of our state dollars on healthcare and about 10% on public safety. Those three items are about 90% of our state budget. Education is obviously our biggest priority. The Bible says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Our heart is in public education.

Homeschool became legal in Texas in 1994 with a 9-0 Supreme Court Ruling.

“We heard the same arguments about homeschooling 30 years ago that it would undermine public education. The education system fought against parents' right to homeschool. Since then, our public school system has grown to be one of the biggest in the nation, and hundreds of thousands of parents homeschool their children.

Teachers should be paid as professionals. It's not just a job.

“I value teachers and have led the way on teacher pay increases since becoming Lt. Governor. This session, the Texas Senate passed a bill that would increase rural

teachers' pay by \$10,000 due to the wage gap between rural and urban/suburban teachers. Urban and suburban teachers would receive a \$3,000 raise on top of the raise they received in 2019.

"In the 2023 regular session, we provided a \$5 billion stipend and a cost-of-living increase for retired teachers. We gave retired teachers 75 and older a \$7,500 stipend check, and those under 75 also received a payment. I wrote that bill with Senator Joan Huffman (R- Houston) with input from Tim Lee of the Retired Teachers Association. The Senate led on that issue.

"Let's put our public school funding in perspective to school choice. For about 5.5 million students in public schools, we will spend about \$39 billion in our current budget. School choice is in a totally separate appropriation. Separate appropriations do not add or subtract from other appropriations. School choice money simply doesn't come from education funding.

"The school choice program is about \$500 million. That is only about 1% of what we spend on public education as a whole. The choice program is for about 50,000 students. That's about 1% of all students in K-12. Texans have been fed total misinformation about school choice by those who oppose it. Those against choice need to understand this issue is not going away.

Those who voted for the budget (General Appropriations Act) in May already voted for school choice funding. It is inconsistent for them now to vote against it when they already voted to fund school choice with \$500 million. It makes one wonder if those who voted for the budget and against school choice even remember they voted to fund it earlier.

"Those who say school choice is taking money away from public school funding and is part of a plan to end public schools are simply ignorant of the facts or not telling the public the truth. It's preposterous even to suggest.

The House killed Teacher Pay Raises — including \$10,000 for rural teachers. That's nearly a 20% raise for many rural teachers.

"The 21 House Republicans who killed school choice this week also killed additional public school funding and teacher pay raises. They REFUSE to give students in failing schools and students with special needs just 1% funding for school choice compared to what we spend on public schools.

"Governor Abbott has said he will not sign a funding and teacher pay raise bill unless an acceptable school choice bill also passes. There is no justification for all the Democrats and 21 Republicans who voted against a school choice plan. School choice is NOT a threat to public schools.

Many House members support choice...for their family.

“Something I find offensive is that some of these anti-school choice Rs and Ds who killed the bill either went to private schools themselves or send their children/grandchildren to private schools. Private schools are good for them and their families, but they won't give the 1% funding to students in need in their districts.

“I suggest the media ask every House Republican and Democrat who voted against school choice if they attended private school or if they send their kids or grandkids to private school.

“And if so, why isn't it suitable for the families in their districts?

“Let's see how many House members are bold enough to respond to both questions.”

More information about Dan Patrick is available at www.DanPatrick.org.

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