

Testimony before the House Committee on Public Education regarding HB 1314

by James Quintero
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Chairman Eissler and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is James Quintero and I am the fiscal policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. I'll be testifying in favor of House Bill 1314 authored by Representative Mark Strama.

Before I begin, I would just like to thank Chairman Strama for all his transparency work—his efforts have helped Texas become the leader in transparency that it is today.

Now, from a fiscal standpoint, there are three reasons the Foundation is excited about HB 1314.

First, it's a proven investment. Transparency initiatives at the state level have shown that the greater the light we shine on government finances, the more opportunities we will have to reduce costs.

Case in point: "Where the Money Goes." With an initial investment of \$300,000, the Comptroller's office has already been able to identify \$8.7 million in cost savings through contract consolidation, the elimination of duplicative services, and getting rid of outdated technology.

Second, transparency measures, such as HB 1314, promote accountability in our state and local governments; and, as we all know, accountability in government is essential if you want to control costs and make sure resources are used efficiently.

Lastly, by giving the public access to more information, the Legislature is helping to better inform the public which will drive a more intelligent debate about how and where our tax dollars should be spent.

It's the Foundation's hope that measures like HB 1314 and other efforts to expand local government transparency—like posting school district check registers and the details of all contracts for goods and services, including the winning and losing bids—are made a top priority this legislative session.

Thank you for your time and I'm available for any questions. 