



# Testimony

## SB 1968

### *Testimony in Support Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee*

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Chairman Taylor, Vice Chairman Lucio, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Richard Johnson, and I am the director of the Booker T. Washington Initiative at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1968. This bill simply gives low-income families the opportunity to get the education that best meets their child's needs.

Children from families with more resources *already have these choices*—they can move to a school district that offers the programs they value, they can find private schools that are the right environment for their child, or they can hire therapists or tutors if their child needs special support.

In the wake of COVID-19, the children who have lost learning have come disproportionately from low-income families. These children were already starting out with significant obstacles in front of them.

The pandemic made their pursuit of the American dream even more of a challenge. The TEA's recent analysis of beginning-of-year assessments led the agency to estimate that [3.2 months of student learning were lost](#) for all students due to the impact of COVID-19. This does not count the “normal” summer slide of about 2.5 months.

The TEA has also sounded the alarm that economically [disadvantaged students were disproportionately not engaged](#) in learning as of May 2020, compared with non-economically disadvantaged students.

These learning losses will have compounding effects for the individual students and their economic futures as well as the economic future of our state. A September 2020 study by Eric Hanushek and Ludger Woessmann estimates that students affected by COVID-19 school closures [may expect up to a “3 percent lower income](#) over their entire lifetimes.” Our nation could see up to a “1.5 percent lower annual GDP for the remainder of the century” as a result of these learning losses.

Now is the time for lawmakers to give families a fighting chance to help their children find the unique environments and resources that they desperately need. Families know their children best, and while public school options may work for many students, they do not work best for all. Please give these children a second chance to achieve their American dream.

Thank you for your consideration. ★

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