

Jason Moore Testimony
Senate Education Committee Hearing, March 22, 2005
On SB 962

Chairman Shapiro, Senate Members....Good Morning. My name for the record is Jason Moore. I am the owner of South West Masonry, Inc. I am a private commercial contractor and sometimes sub-contract on the construction of school facilities. I'm here today in SUPPORT of SB 962. I believe this bill is a good start to bringing down the cost of educating our children and will help districts in terms of time, energy, efficiency. I have worked on school projects that involved millions of dollars and wondered why a school district would spend all this money so extravagantly when they could build something simple, nice and affordable to its taxpayers. I've seen school districts build Moroccan archways when they could have built a simple entryway that would have sufficed. I can provide numerous examples of what school districts are doing and provide numerous examples of what school districts SHOULD BE doing with their school facilities money. But for the sake of efficiency, I shall keep my testimony short, simple, and to the point.

This issue has become a passion of mine for some time now as I have worked with Americans for Prosperity to try to put real perspective on this issue, since we continually seem to be at this place of needing more and more money for education. The thing I most appreciate about this bill is that it addresses the out of control spending that doesn't have to occur. If our true goal is to educate children, then let's focus the lion's share of the dollars on the actual classroom and teacher. What good does it do to have a multi-million dollar building and no way to fill it with books or teachers?

How do we know that some of the things proposed in this bill will work if implemented? Let me just give you 3 examples of direct quotes taken from the comptroller's website. In Nov. 1997 a survey was sent to all 1037 schools districts (at the time) and asked to project what their needs would be for facilities through the year 2003. In addition, they were asked questions about strategies they were using now to control their costs of construction. While it is obvious that a majority of schools have not used many (if any at all) cost constraints, a few had these remarks:

- HCISD uses building prototypes to control construction costs.
- Because the district used the same plan for all three schools, HCISD paid architectural fees of 3.5 percent, instead of the normal 6 percent, for the second and third schools. Exhibit 5-7 shows HCISD saved more than \$238,000 in architectural fees by using prototype designs.
- Exhibit 5-10 shows RISD's savings in architectural fees by using prototype buildings will exceed \$1.2 million.

I would also like to submit the SMARTSchools plan implemented by the Florida Department of Education as a good starting point for the TEA to develop their criteria for approving funds to assist in the construction of school buildings.

As a contractor I realize it may seem odd that I am in here supporting scaling down the construction of school buildings. I AM taking a risk at repercussions to my livelihood but right is right and the accumulation of ornate and extravagant schools BUILDINGS is not the goal of education. Strangely enough it is the increase of knowledge in each of our children. I have said before, we could build every school in Texas out of the gold bars in Fort Knox and it will not make our kids one IQ point smarter or improve student performance because I have never seen a brick teach a kid to read! I have estimated Texas taxpayers overspend approximately \$800 million per biennium on these extravagant schools; I believe this bill will begin to reign in some of that over-spending.

This concludes my testimony and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have. One last thing, Senate Members, I would like to invite all of you and your staffers for a detailed presentation being held today at 2 pm in Room E2.020. I will be providing more detailed information on the business of constructing school facilities more efficiently. Again, that briefing will take place at 2 pm today in Room E2.020.

Thank you.

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