

Miguel Solis Testimony/Senate Bill 4/Senate Education Committee

Good morning/afternoon Committee Chair Shapiro and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Miguel Solis and I currently teach in a 1,200 student urban public middle school in Dallas, TX, where nearly 80% of students qualify for free-and-reduced lunch. Teaching in an urban setting has opened my eyes to the need for excellent teachers and an educational system that holds professionals accountable for providing an outstanding education for every student, no matter their background or school they attend.

The quality of education our country provides its children plays a major role in determining the forecast of millions of Americans. Sadly, America has become a living lottery; one's quality of education and life prospects depends on where you are born. President Kennedy once said "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." If we intend on regaining our rightful place among the elite educational countries of the world while also providing a superior education for ALL students, we must OWN our current student results and implement effective policy like Senate Bill 04 that evaluates teacher quality by holding us accountable to the results we see from our students.

Continuously improving our educational system, and more importantly, our effectiveness as educators, cannot start with our own subjective guesses about where and how we can do better. We must work from a base of objective, quantitative information. Only by holding ourselves accountable to objective student achievement data can we identify how to improve. I can testify that holding MYSELF to this standard has allowed me to become a more effective educator and has resulted in the transformation of the life paths of numerous students.

Setting quantitative goals has allowed me to analyze objective data on a daily basis as it comes in and re-evaluate my effectiveness as a leader of people on a mission. Because of this process of holding myself accountable to results, my students have achieved at significantly higher levels than their peers and I am certain that this has impacted their mindsets about school, their intelligence, and most importantly, their aspirations. Simply put, there is no magic science to why students are or are not successful. What it truly comes down to is how willing I am to hold myself accountable to the standardized results I see from my students and what I am going to do to improve them. If a student does not succeed in my class, I could attempt to point to numerous factors like a lack of parental support or home to study in, but the reality is that I am responsible for the education of the children in my class, and as such, I must fill the knowledge and skill gap regardless of circumstances.

One child who has shown significant success in my class is Valentin, a fatherless thirteen year-old boy whose mother was deported back to Honduras early in his life and who is being raised by his twenty-one year-old brother. By today's societal and educational forecast, this young

man is facing a path to mediocrity. However, everyday, Valentin looks forward to walking twenty minutes to school where he can count on me to put forth my best effort in providing him with the education he deserves in which I hold myself accountable to his academic results during the year. Through my use of data, Valentin is able to see and feel EMPOWERED both by his academic growth and success. Now Valentin is OWNING his learning by utilizing the data I have collected from his standardized results to pinpoint his own academic strengths and weaknesses; something that will be critical to his success in college and a future profession. Unfortunately, many other children with similar backgrounds are not as fortunate due to a lack of accountability and effectiveness. Valentin's story has further opened my eyes to the need for effective policy like Senate Bill 04 that holds teachers like myself accountable to the academic results we are seeing in our classrooms.