

**TESTIMONY: JODDIE W. WITTE, SUPERINTENDENT
VAN ISD**

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING-APRIL 18, 2011

AGAINST CSSB 22

Good morning. My name is Joddie Witte. I have been in education for 52 years which includes eight years as a school Business Manager and twenty two years as a Superintendent. I come from the days of the Gilmer Aiken School Finance Bill. Back then we calculated revenue on a yellow pad. Those were the days when there were no school funding equity suits.

We are now experiencing the most difficult time in the history of school finance in Texas. This is not a time to panic. This is not a time for local politics. There is no doubt that the membership, in both the House and Senate, has the expertise to develop a school finance bill that is fair to all of the 4.7 million students in the State of Texas. **Senate Bill CSSB 22 is not where we need to be.** The preliminary version of Senate Bill CSSB 22 includes provisions that are unfair and inequitable such as the following:

1. The bill does not eliminate target revenue
2. The funding gap between the low target revenue district and high target revenue district is over \$8,200.00 per student.
3. Low target revenue districts have felt the financial pain for five years, and under **CSSB 22**, will continue to feel the pain for an additional six years while high target revenue districts will continue to have the funds to support instructional programs that low target revenue districts have dreamed about for years.
4. Texas ranks 42 out of 50 states in expenditures per student. **CSSB 22** has the potential to reduce expenditures per student that could make Texas financial effort in education close to last in the nation. On the positive side, Texas teachers, administrators, and other non-teaching staff have been productive as indicated by our high ranking for academic performance (NAEP SCORES-ranked 8th). Other states envy Texas accountability efforts and performance results.

We now have perhaps the most **golden opportunity** since Gilmer Aiken to do what is right for Texas 4.7 million students. The taxpayers in Texas and the future workforce in Texas deserve no less.

The Texas legislature is on the verge of accomplishing school funding history in Texas. Substitute **CSHB 2485** and **Senator Seliger's School Funding Plan**

contain provisions that could form the foundation for fairness and equity for school funding for many years to come.

In developing your final education bill, a fair and equitable bill would include, but not limited, to the following provisions:

1. Eliminates the grossly unfair target revenue system.
2. The funding gap needs to be reduced significantly. **What is fair for one student should be fair for all students regardless of where they live.**
3. Low target revenue districts should not continue to be penalized financially at the expense of high target revenue districts.
4. Do not eliminate and or reduce any of the current weights for CATE, GT, Compensatory Education or Bilingual as provided for in **CSHB 2485**.
5. Increase the Basic Allotment sooner than 2016 as provided in CSSB 22.
6. The bill should include a transition plan that insures that all districts are included in a cost-based formula system that is **fair, equitable, and efficient**.
7. Maintain the small school adjustment

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to your process. As Judge Scott McCown said recently “Texans want a balanced approach that protects our priorities, including protecting today’s jobs and preparing our children for tomorrow’s jobs. You now have a golden opportunity to do what is right for Texas taxpayer’s two most precious possessions-**their children and their tax dollars**.”

