



RYAN GUILLEN
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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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GUILLEN LOOKS FORWARD TO ADDRESSING SCHOOL FINANCE FIX IN SPECIAL SESSION

H.B. 21 Failed After Funding Objectives Splintered Support Among Legislators

AUSTIN - Texas State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) looks forward to placing education finance reform at the top of his agenda going into the Special Session in July, after H.B. 21 was defeated in the Legislature.

"Education in the state of Texas is a formative part of any child's development," Guillen said. "The fact that we cannot even reach a bipartisan consensus on this issue is troubling."

H.B. 21 would have served as a momentous overhaul of the Texas financial allocation system. The bill would have revised certain aspects of the formulas used to determine school district and charter school entitlements under the Foundation School Program, and increased Texas' Basic Allotment from \$5,140 to \$5,350.

The bill would have created new weighted funding for students with dyslexia and students in bilingual education programs, while also expanding weighted funding for 8th graders and high school students in career and technology education programs. Moreover, the Additional State Aide for Tax Reduction (ASATR) program allocated funds to districts that were vulnerable due to low property taxes. The bill would have updated the formula for the distribution of ASATR funds to school districts reliant on these funds. Overall, the bill sought to inject up to \$1.6 billion into the public education sector.

Controversially, the bill was amended in the Senate to include funding for vouchers to students with disabilities to attend private schools. Critics highlighted the potential negative side-effects to already underperforming districts, while supporters noted the great benefits to the individual students given the freedom to choose to attend a better school for their own self-growth. During the Regular Session, the Legislature failed to pass H.B. 21 because of this conflict over vouchers.

"School finance in Texas has been outdated and fundamentally flawed for years," Guillen remarked. "I look forward to being able to bring a comprehensive and beneficial solution to this issue for all Texas students."

Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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