

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Phelan, and Members of the Legislature:

Students and educators across our state face daunting challenges in overcoming educational disruptions from the pandemic. For our state to fully recover, our public schools, community colleges, and universities must fully recover.

At the same time lawmakers are finalizing state budgets in Austin, educators around the state are planning accelerated learning strategies to get students back on track for their academic and social-emotional learning needs over the summer and in the upcoming school year. This is a pivotal moment for our students and our educational institutions, and your continued leadership is essential for our state's future.

Philanthropy Advocates is focused on meeting the post-pandemic needs of students, educators, and communities. Our members – over 55 foundations with deep commitments across Texas – continue to invest in accelerated learning programs, solutions to food insecurity and other wraparound services, emergency tuition assistance, and efforts to eliminate barriers to digital access. Our members aim to deliver high-impact resources quickly to communities.

In 2018, Philanthropy Advocates convened a “big tent” of advocates and allies supporting school finance reform. The effort united philanthropy, the business community, and education advocates, driving home the message grounded in data and research that *money matters in public education*. And it still matters, now, more than ever.

The school finance reforms that passed the Texas Legislature in 2019 were consequential and historic reforms of our state's public education system. We applaud state leaders for maintaining these reforms, recognizing that money in public and higher education is even more urgent today. State leaders' commitment to hold our schools “harmless” from funding cuts for drops in enrollment during the pandemic further stabilized Texas public schools. We now must transition from stability to ensuring all educational agencies and organizations have the resources necessary to fulfill tomorrow's needs—from early literacy to re-skilling and up-skilling. Our state's economic future depends on it.

A critical step remains to support a full recovery. Through three COVID relief packages, the federal government provided billions intended for public schools and institutions of higher education. With new federal funds available for Texas communities, we urge you to provide the resources our schools and colleges need to address disruptions in learning as soon as possible.

We know Texas is facing a generational education challenge that will take significant, strategic, and sustained investment. Philanthropic resources alone cannot close the gaps created by the pandemic. We look forward to continued partnership with the state to scale impact for our education communities.

Sincerely,

Wynn Rosser, Ph.D.
Philanthropy Advocates Leadership Committee Chair
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