



SCHERTZ-CIBOLO-UNIVERSAL CITY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*Dr. Greg Gibson
Superintendent*

- ★ All Graduates will be College and/or Career and/or Military Ready
- ★ High-Performing and Engaged Workforce
- ★ Highly Satisfied Students, Parents and Community
- ★ Efficient District and Campus Operations

To: SCUC State Legislators

From: SCUC ISD Team of Eight and
Great Conversations Team

Date: December 7, 2018

Re: 86th Legislative Session Request

Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD believes in ensuring a unified voice for our community. To that end, we present one letter of legislative requests to the following elected state officials:

- State Senators:
 - The Honorable Donna Campbell
 - The Honorable Peter Flores
- State Representatives:
 - The Honorable Roland Gutierrez
 - The Honorable John Kuempel
 - The Honorable Leo Pacheco

Our top priorities for the 86th Legislative Session includes:

1. Increased Funding for Public Education – The State’s share of funding for public education has decreased to 38% since 2007, placing an inordinate burden on local property taxes to fund public education. We are hopeful increased funding can be procured during the regular budget process. Also, current discussions related to possible tax compression, or tax cap, is not beneficial to public education funding. We urge lawmakers from both sides of the political aisle to reach consensus.

Two particular issues are exacerbating the increasing budgetary struggles:

- a) Special Education mandate – A federal ruling intended to make up for a cap put in place by the Texas Education Agency is forcing local school districts to confront spending increases in an era of tight budgets to provide for special education services. SCUC ISD is looking at a possible \$650,000 budget amendment just to meet this requirement for the remainder of the 2018-2019 school year. This will require a permanent, reoccurring expense going forward, which has the potential to be as much as \$1.5 million for SCUC for the 2019-2020 school year
- b) Full Implementation of HB 5 – This law, passed during the Texas 83rd Legislative session changes graduation requirements for students entering 9th grade and significantly reduces high-stakes testing among high school students. Other major effects of HB 5 include how students elect an academic focus, and what courses are available to fulfill the requirements of each of the five available graduation paths. While SCUC ISD was poised to make this transition, the expanded offerings has required expanding staff and facilities, which, in light of the reduced state share of public education funding, has forced us to made difficult choices, such as delaying scheduled maintenance and the replacement of outdated equipment and facilities.



Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD, a diverse community founded in trust and transparency, commits to empower all students to fulfill lifelong potential through inspiring learning experiences.

2. Public Dollars in Public Schools – SCUC ISD supports this proposal, being championed by Raise Your Hand Texas, which supports quality school choice and innovative programs within the public school system. It would oppose any form of taxpayer subsidy to private schools and vendors, such as: Tax Credit Scholarships, Education Savings Accounts, and Vouchers for Students in Special Education.
3. School Safety – This item is now a permanent discussion for all public schools going forward. SCUC ISD has added safety components and School Resource Officers (SROs) and continues to make a safe, secure learning environment paramount to all of its students. However, we believe school safety involves more than just the hardening of schools. Greater state funding is needed for additional counselors and programs such as Communities in Schools to ensure there is emotional learning support for all students. Additionally, in keeping with the District’s Belief Statements, discussions on how any potential additional dollars should be spent need to be made by all community stakeholders, including students, staff, and Board Trustees.
4. TRS-Care Health Insurance – The 85th Legislative Session did not adequately address the Health Care Plan for retired teachers, which levied exorbitant premium increases, forcing many retirees to struggle to meet these costs on fixed incomes. Retired teachers who have faithfully dedicated their lives to educating Texas students deserve a modicum of respect for their years of service. SCUC also believes the failure to address this component will hamper school districts in the search and retention of top-flight teachers.
5. Existing Debt Allotment/Fast Growth – SCUC ISD, as many other Fast Growth school districts, is finding stress points in its budget because of the State’s reduced funding of the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA). It was devised to provide a guaranteed yield for local school districts to assist with the Interest and Sinking (I&S) taxes. However, building new schools to meet the burgeoning population has now become problematic because the State’s share has declined steadily since the inception of the program. A fully funded EDA program will allow Fast Growth school districts to actually lower the I&S tax rate to its community stakeholders.
6. Unfunded Mandates – The State Legislatures has been requiring public school districts to pay for unfunded mandates, asking them to implement items where funding is not provided. Senate Bill 507, passed in by the 84th Legislature, epitomizes this dilemma. It requires public school districts to provide equipment, including video cameras in self-contained classrooms or other special education settings, if requested by a parent. The bill also requires a school district or charter school to keep the recorded video for at least six months after it was recorded. Equipment costs aside, the requirements for storage and information storage and security is an expense that is not reimbursed to school districts. This is just but one example of the unintended consequences of unfunded mandates we hope state legislators will take into account when considering increasing its share of public education funding.
7. Responsible use of High-Stakes Testing – SCUC ISD is appreciative the State of Texas has tempered the emphasis on high-stakes testing to measure student and school district accountability. We acknowledge these tests do provide some benchmarks of teaching and learning. However, as SCUC Belief Statement eight affirms, “We believe measures of success go beyond standardized testing.” We respectfully ask that future standardized tests not be used to evaluate teachers, and that STAAR test performances take a drastically reduced role in the A-F measurement of school districts.

We look forward to discussing these matters with you face to face on February 26, 2019, and regularly thereafter until the end of session.

