



STATE OF TEXAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TRENT ASHBY

District 57

July 10, 2020

Governor Abbott,

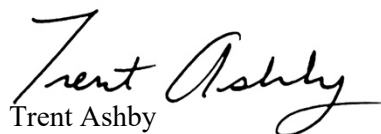
In March of this year, you wisely waived the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. Your thoughtful decision to alleviate the burden of standardized tests at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates not only your commitment to the health and well-being of our educational community, but also reflects a compassionate understanding of the challenges posed by high-stakes testing – especially in this time of uncertainty. As such, given the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Texas, I write you today to ask that you employ the same wisdom and compassion displayed in March of 2020 to request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education that would exempt Texas from standardized testing requirements for the 2020-2021 school year.

As a member of the House Committee on Public Education during the 86th Legislative Session, I was fortunate to participate in the crafting of historic legislation that promotes and prioritizes greater equity in public schools to achieve greater academic success. Unfortunately, the harsh reality is that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undermine the progress we've made through its inherently disproportionate effect on students and teachers. By requiring high-stakes standardized tests, we not only take for granted the students with limited access to the resources needed to properly prepare, but also unfairly determine accountability based on a school year in which there is no way to ensure consistent instruction statewide. By waiving the STAAR testing requirements for the 2020-2021 school year, we will empower local school districts and educators to tailor their own exams to accurately measure academic progress without the fear of a looming high-stakes test date.

As we move closer to the 2020-2021 school year, it is my sincere hope that you will once again see fit to request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to exempt Texas schools from the STAAR exams. In doing so, the State of Texas will lead – as it always has – through thoughtful policy and bold action. Removing this burden allows our students and teachers to focus on instruction, growth, and development, which will ultimately lead to a better and more productive learning environment. Given the amount of time our students have been out of the classroom, the importance of quality instruction cannot be understated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for your leadership during these trying times. If I can ever be of assistance, please contact me at (512) 463-0508.

Respectfully,


Trent Ashby