

## Support HB 3318 by Rep. Allen / SB 1977 by Sen. Springer

Empowers more parents of children with disabilities by offering the option of full-day, inclusive pre-k if recommended in the student's Individualized Education Plan

### Inclusive Full-Day Pre-k Is Beneficial for All Children Who Attend

- Children with disabilities who attend pre-k have an opportunity to:
  - ✓ Learn school routines that improve learning and reduce disruptive behavior in the future.
  - ✓ Build friendships and practice language and social skills.
  - ✓ Develop skills in pre-literacy and other areas that lead to success in later grades.
- In inclusive settings, students who do not have disabilities develop a stronger self-identity by learning that all children have value, everyone has strengths and challenges, and all students can both learn and teach.<sup>1</sup>
- A number of studies across the country show that effective pre-k programs reduce the need for special education and help prevent grade retention.<sup>2</sup>

### But Current Texas Pre-k Eligibility Criteria Omits Kids with Disabilities

- Texas offers full-day pre-k for 4-year-olds (and some 3-year-olds) in the following populations:
  - low-income or homeless
  - emergent bilingual
  - currently/previously in foster care
  - child of active duty military
  - child of a member of the armed forces killed in action or injured
  - child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Award

### Today, Kids With Disabilities *Might* Get Full-Day Pre-k if Recommended in the IEP Developed by Parents and Staff — But There are Real Barriers

- Although Texas supports Early Childhood Special Education (ESCE) services, which can include speech and physical therapies and other early learning services, students with disabilities are considered “low priority” for public pre-k if they are not already included through the state's pre-k eligibility list.
- When kids with disabilities need pre-k, schools are disincentivized from including public pre-k in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) because Texas does not fund pre-k for kids with disabilities.
- Even if an IEP calls for full-day pre-k, schools only provide it if there's an open seat in the pre-k class — and may remove the student to make room for a new student.
- When districts offer only *half-day* pre-k to children with disabilities, many working parents can't use it because the three-hour school day is incompatible with their work day.

### The Bill Improves Access to Full-Day Pre-k for Students with Disabilities

- It amends the current pre-k eligibility list to include students with an IEP that recommends pre-k.
- If pre-k is recommended in the IEP, the parent will decide whether to enroll their child or not.
- The bill is also backed by Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Disability Rights Texas, TX Council of Administrators of Special Education, TX Association for the Education of Young Children, and others.

<sup>1</sup> The Advantages of Inclusive Preschool for Typical Children (2015). University of Colorado.

<sup>2</sup> The Research is Clear: High-Quality Pre-k Pays Off (2019). Texans Care for Children.