

# HB 41 Will Make Pre-K Even More Effective, Ensure More Kids Are Ready for Kindergarten

## Testimony to the House Public Education Committee in Support of HB 41

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HB 41 by Rep. James Talarico will ensure pre-k class sizes and student-teacher ratios are manageable, meet national best practices, and create an optimal learning environment for children. Low class sizes and student-teacher ratios have been shown to boost pre-k programs' effectiveness, helping more kids be ready for kindergarten and be on grade level in third grade. While state law sets a limit of 22 students per class for kindergarten through fourth grade, there is **no statewide standard for pre-k** class size or student-teacher ratios. A 2016 report commissioned by the Texas Education Agency recommended a maximum of 22 students and no more than 11 students for each teacher or aide in a classroom with more than 15 students. HB 41 would enact that recommendation to give kids a more enriching early education.

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## Low Pre-k Class Size/Ratios are One of Two Key Predictors of Kindergarten Readiness and Success in Third Grade

- With a class size of over 22 students per teacher, it's challenging even for the most experienced teacher to address each child's needs, manage behavioral challenges, and get young students ready for kindergarten.
- According to the E3 Alliance's analysis of Texas education data, it takes the **combination of full-day Pre-K and low student-teacher ratios to see significantly greater Kindergarten readiness**, leading to better outcomes across a child's education.<sup>1</sup>
- The Texas Education Agency has reported that **"the effects of high-quality pre-k programs continue to benefit [Texas] students as they get older**, reducing their likelihood of dropping out of school by two percent, and increasing their likelihood of graduating from high school on time (by six percent), enrolling in college (by seven percent), and attending the second year of college (by six percent)."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E3 Alliance (2016). Quality Pre-K Matters. Retrieved from: <https://e3alliance.org/2016/02/10/quality-pre-k-matters/>

<sup>2</sup> Texas Commission on Public School Finance (2018). Funding for Impact: Equitable Funding for Students Who Need It the Most. Retrieved from: [https://tea.texas.gov/Finance\\_and\\_Grants/State\\_Funding/Additional\\_Finance\\_Resources/Texas\\_Commission\\_on\\_Public\\_School\\_Finance](https://tea.texas.gov/Finance_and_Grants/State_Funding/Additional_Finance_Resources/Texas_Commission_on_Public_School_Finance)

## HB 41 Enacts the Recommendations of the TEA-Commissioned Report on Pre-k Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratios

- The study recommended a maximum class size limit of 22 and a student-teacher ratio of 11:1.<sup>3</sup>
- There is no statewide standard for pre-k class size or student-teacher ratios. **State law establishes a limit of 22 students per class for kindergarten through fourth grade.**

## Many Districts are Already in Compliance with HB 41's Standards, and Support is Available to Ease the Transition to HB 41

- In 2019-20, the average pre-k class size in Texas was 19, and the average teacher-student ratio was 17:1.<sup>4</sup>
- However, according to a 2021 report from the Texas Education Agency, **hundreds of pre-k classrooms operate with an average teacher-student ratio of 1:30 or worse.**<sup>5</sup>
- With the influx of federal COVID relief dollars, increased state education expenditures through HB 3, and more robust support from TEA in implementing strategies to partner with neighborhood child care centers, it is the ideal time to assess and bolster districts' requirements.
- However, for programs unable to meet the proposed standard in HB 41, **TEA would have the authority to grant waivers as needed.**

## While Other States Enhance Their Pre-k Standards, Texas is Falling Behind

- According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, **Texas meets only three of ten proven quality benchmarks for high-quality pre-k.**<sup>6</sup>
- 74% of state pre-k initiatives across the country required class sizes of 20 children or fewer.
- 81% of state pre-k initiatives across the country required student-teacher ratios of 11:1 or better.

With renewed attention and momentum to increasing the state's focus on a child's earliest years, the time has come to raise our standards and investment in high-quality pre-k classrooms to give children a greater foundation for lifelong success. The class size and ratio limits enacted by HB 41 will be a strong start in ensuring that all children have the opportunity to receive a positive and effective early education.

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<sup>3</sup> Texas Education Agency (2016). Texas Public Prekindergarten Class Size and Student-to-Teacher Ratio Study. Retrieved from: [https://tea.texas.gov/Reports\\_and\\_Data/Program\\_Evaluations/Research\\_Reports/Program\\_Evaluation\\_\\_Research\\_Reports/](https://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Program_Evaluations/Research_Reports/Program_Evaluation__Research_Reports/)

<sup>4</sup> Texas Education Agency (2021). TPEIR Texas Education Reports. Retrieved from: [https://www.texaseducationinfo.org/PickList.aspx?Page=Prekindergarten+Programs&ReportName=tpeir\\_pk\\_enroll\\_funds\\_state&PickList=School+Year&SubList=No&Title=Texas+Public+Prekindergarten+Programs+and+Enrollment+Ages+3+and+4+-+Statewide&Graph=N&from=Home%2fTopic%2fPrekindergarten+Programs](https://www.texaseducationinfo.org/PickList.aspx?Page=Prekindergarten+Programs&ReportName=tpeir_pk_enroll_funds_state&PickList=School+Year&SubList=No&Title=Texas+Public+Prekindergarten+Programs+and+Enrollment+Ages+3+and+4+-+Statewide&Graph=N&from=Home%2fTopic%2fPrekindergarten+Programs)

<sup>5</sup> Texas Education Agency (2021). House Bill 3 Student-Teacher Ratio Report. Retrieved from: [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/hb3-student-teacher\\_ratio\\_report.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/hb3-student-teacher_ratio_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The National Institute for Early Education Research (2019). State Preschool Yearbook. Retrieved from: <https://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/2019-2>