

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
1100 San Jacinto Blvd
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott,

Thank you for your ongoing leadership as Texas begins to emerge from the first global pandemic in 100 years. Your steady and balanced governance has put the Lone Star State in a position to recover stronger than ever.

We are grateful for your commitment to getting kids back in schools and your relentless work over the past year to give them the necessary equipment to continue their education whether virtually or in person. Your support for creating the Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) program was essential. SSES provides families of children with special needs \$1,500 grants to purchase services providing additional education support. These children were dramatically cut off from essential therapies and interventions as a result of school closures. This grant program has been a lifeline to families throughout the state who witnessed years of progress for their child(ren) disappear over the course of just a few months

As of today, nearly 12,000 students have submitted applications to utilize these grants for special needs services they have missed over the past year. From those applications, TEA has awarded grants to approximately 7,000 students. Thousands of Texas families are grateful for the much-needed assistance, but thousands more are struggling and waiting for the help they desperately need from an expanded SSES program.

Senator Larry Taylor filed SB 1716 to statutorily preserve and expand the SSES program. We're excited by its prospects of passage.

With the influx of \$18 billion in federal education funds coming into our state, we are asking you to further fund the existing SSES program and expand eligibility so those with special needs can obtain the supplemental educational options they need to be successful.

The global pandemic further exposed the serious challenges confronting families of students with special needs and the imperative of providing the fullest range of educational options and continuity of care for their children. By using some of these federal dollars to expand this program, Texas families can get the help they need to get their children back to a place of healthy progress and success.

Thank you again for your continued leadership as we all work together to recover from the pandemic and build a brighter future for every child in the Lone Star State.

Sincerely,



CC: Lt. Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker Dade Phelan
Chairman Larry Taylor
Chairman Harold Dutton
Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath