

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Terry Canales
District 40

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor, State of Texas
Texas State Capitol, Room 2S.1
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Abbott:

Our state and our nation are facing unprecedented challenges from the emergence of COVID-19. The effects of the Coronavirus will have a resounding impact on our education system for years to come due in part by the temporary closing of schools and the jarring conversion to at-home learning. At this very moment, our teachers are attempting to convert the last two months of school instruction into take-home packets and livestreamed videos—for which essentially no school district was prepared to do. While I am grateful for our teachers' hard work and dedication, I do not think this plan is working for Texas students. I am writing to you today to ask that you consider formally ending instruction for the 2019-2020 school year, and re-focus the efforts of our education leaders into planning the 2020-2021 school year, which we know will come with many significant challenges.

As schools are attempting to move to education at home, students are relying heavily on take-home packets, online learning, and the hope that their parents can become teachers overnight. While this may work well in some parts of the state, it does not hold true to everyone, everywhere. This is especially true to my constituents and the people of the Rio Grande Valley. Upwards of 40% of my constituents do not have internet access. Our superintendents are doing everything they can to provide laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots, but a large percentage of the population live in areas where hotspots are not a viable option, and internet is completely unavailable. Additionally, many parents of these children work all day, have minimal knowledge of pedagogy, or have substantive language barriers.

My greatest fear is that we are doing a terrible disservice to the future of our state—our Texas students. Students across the state are learning from home in silos, and they are not all learning equally. I have no doubt that this home-education experiment will expand the divide in academic



growth and inequalities among Texas students. Pedagogy is an art and a skill that we as parents do not all possess, so we should heavily consider leaving it to the professionals.

After your March 31 executive order, it has become certain that our students will not be physically attending a normal classroom until at least May 4. I humbly ask you to help keep our communities strong by using your authority, as Chief Executive of the State of Texas, to immediately end the 2019-2020 school year for students. I also request that the state instruct our schools to begin working on a robust plan for the 2020-2021 school year. By formally ending instructions for the 2019-2020 school year, school district leaders will have additional time to begin focusing their energy to ensure that all the students bounce back from their lapse in structured academia, whether this means learning in the classroom or at a distance.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. If you need further assistance from my office, please know that I am always accessible to you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Canales', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Terry Canales