



A Union of Professionals

Texas AFT

AFL-CIO

**RESPECT
US EXPECT
US**

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Zeph Capo
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Dear Member,

On behalf of the 66,000 members of the Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT), we are excited to welcome you back for the 2022-2023 school year. Through Texas AFT, we build our collective power to make a difference in the lives of our students and our members. Our members work hard every day, educating our students, advocating for better working conditions and better learning environments, and mobilizing to elect pro-public school candidates. Together, we are able to win big changes thanks to our collective action. Please visit our Welcome Back page that provides details about our union's work, including links to many member benefits and upcoming events. Visit www.texasaft.org/welcomeback (see QR code)

Over the past few months, we have published surveys and hosted numerous focus groups to learn more about the issues concerning public school employees. The findings were eye-opening, but not surprising. Overwhelming numbers of educators and support professionals told us they have thought about leaving the profession, that their workloads are unreasonable, that their pay and benefits have not kept up with inflation, and that they do not feel safe at work because of either COVID-19 or gun violence. These issues have resulted in a staffing crisis and show the urgent need for state lawmakers to make a real investment in funding our public schools.

I am proud to announce that our union has launched our statewide campaign: **Respect Us Expect Us**. I encourage you and your co-workers to visit our campaign page and take our Respect Pledge at www.texasaft.org/respect (see QR code). Our campaign has already seen local wins on salary increases, workload reductions, and improved working conditions. Throughout this new school year, we have an opportunity to build our union's power by asking our co-workers to join our campaign, electing leaders who respect us to the Texas Legislature, and demanding our local school board members work with us to find solutions to the issues we face in our classrooms and worksites. It is time for change. It is time we fight for the respect public school employees and students deserve.

Our collective activism will keep the "public" in public education, help our schools remain the centers of our communities, and ensure school employee voices are heard in the halls of power. We will continue to advocate and fight for the issues that matter most to our members, and we will win. Now more than ever, it is vital for our members to engage their colleagues and ask them to become more involved. I invite you to grow your advocacy with our union and help us build a strong movement for public education across Texas.

Together, Texas public school educators — working with parents, students, and their communities — can ensure that quality public education remains the birthright of every child who sets foot in a Texas public school. By uniting our voices, we are ensuring the promise of public education reaches every child.

In Unity,

Zeph Capo
Texas AFT President

