



Texas AFT

*A Union of Professionals*

[www.texasaft.org](http://www.texasaft.org)

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November 3, 2022

Gov. Greg Abbott  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

Rep. Dade Phelan, speaker of the House  
Room 2W.13  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768

Sen. Joan Huffman, chair of the Senate Finance Committee  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Rep. Dr. Greg Bonnen, chair of the House Appropriations Committee  
Room E2.504  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Gov. Abbott, Lt. Gov. Patrick, Speaker Phelan, Sen. Huffman, and Rep. Bonnen:

It is no secret that our union has often disagreed with state leaders over the past two years when it comes to public education policy. As educators, school employees, and Texans, we believe in speaking truth to power and advocating for our students. We also believe, however, in voicing our appreciation when it's due.

On that note, I am writing to you on behalf of the 66,000 members of the Texas American Federation of Teachers to express our gratitude for the \$400 million allotted in October to assist school districts in making critical safety upgrades.



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When we surveyed Texans in June after the tragedy in Uvalde, 96% of the more than 5,000 respondents told us they want the Texas Legislature to increase funding for public education to facilitate campus security upgrades and greater mental health resources for students.

Investments in the safety of our schools is something all Texans can agree on, regardless of party affiliation or ideology. On that note, we hope this additional funding is just the beginning of much-needed investments in our public schools, just as we hope it is the first of many reforms to reduce the likelihood of our students or educators becoming victims of gun violence.

I would make one more request of you regarding the \$400 million funding for safety upgrades. This money, when distributed by the Texas Education Agency, should include stipulations that require districts to listen to the input of stakeholders before spending it.

In conversations with Texas educators this summer, we heard repeatedly that teachers are concerned by how little voice they have in state and local decision-making about public education. Our schools are their workplaces, and they deserve to have a voice at the table in any decisions about how best to secure those workplaces. Our educators and support staff often have knowledge that is vital to improving the safety of our schools that will not be addressed if left solely to school administration.

To underscore this point, I am enclosing a copy of “Texas Needs Teachers! Voices From the Field,” our report from a series of focus groups with Texas teachers. Please keep them in mind as you plan for the legislative session in January.

Respectfully,

Zeph Capo

President, Texas AFT