

## **TAD reappraisal plan intentionally hurts children across Tarrant County**

In their new reappraisal plan approved on August 9, the Tarrant Appraisal District Board of Directors deliberately defunded public schools across the county at a time when Texas public schools are already facing multimillion-dollar deficits because of political posturing at the state level.

For weeks, Tarrant County school districts provided the TAD board with information about how the plan would result in millions of dollars in lost funding for schools and harm student programs. While it could be argued that the reappraisal plan's defunding of public education was an unintended consequence, school districts fully informed TAD in specific detail of how public education funding would be decreased by the state. If the defunding of public schools were truly unintentional, then the TAD board had ample opportunity to correct its mistake. Instead, they chose to intentionally harm the funding of public schools in Tarrant County.

School district leaders met with TAD representatives in private to inform them of how the plan would result in an immediate funding loss from the state when property values fall outside a 10% difference from the state's calculations. During this meeting, TAD officials displayed a shocking lack of understanding regarding school funding laws, despite school districts representing the largest taxing entities within an appraisal district. For an appraisal district to be unaware of how its operations affect its largest taxing entities is inexcusable.

In their next public meeting, the TAD board again heard from school district leaders – for three hours of public comments, again going into painstaking detail of the plan's impact on schools. While a mechanism to prevent appraisal values from falling outside the state's 10% threshold was added to the plan, it was quickly removed following a motion by new board member Eric Morris. Throughout the meeting, TAD board members expressed no desire to compromise so school districts wouldn't lose vital funding.

At the end of the day, it's children who suffer. It's the elementary student struggling with reading who will no longer receive intervention assistance because a support position had to be eliminated. It's the secondary student who will no longer be able to take part in their favorite extracurricular program because the program was cut. It's the child struggling with distractions in class who will now have more distractions when additional students are added because class-size ratios were increased to decrease payroll budgets. These are not probabilities – they are very harsh and forthcoming realities, the consequences of which have an exponential negative impact on children.

To be clear, the new reappraisal plan will negatively impact more than 380,000 children in public schools across Tarrant County. With a combined loss estimated to exceed \$100 million, districts will now face devastating staffing reductions and cuts in programs offered to students. School districts have faced ongoing funding shortages because of political maneuvering at the state level, and now Tarrant County families and education stakeholders face even further funding reductions in their schools when this political theater has filtered down to local politics.

Examples of estimated total annual funding losses for Tarrant County school districts include:

- Castleberry ISD: \$1.4 million
- Crowley ISD: \$7.5 million
- Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD: \$11.2 million
- Everman ISD: \$1.8 million
- Fort Worth ISD: \$45 million
- Kennedale ISD: \$2.1 million
- Lake Worth ISD: \$1.2 million
- Northwest ISD: \$10 million
- White Settlement ISD: \$3.5 million

Not only does the reappraisal plan harm school districts, claims that it will truly benefit taxpayers remain dubious at best. Homeowners will see skyrocketing tax bills when reappraisals are finally issued, and those looking to sell their homes will not have concrete valuations to support listing prices. For homeowners in more established areas, property valuations that would have decreased are now locked in at higher rates. Artificially freezing residential property values provides little benefit to homeowners or the community as a whole.

None of this has to happen. Public schools serve as the foundation of a thriving community, and sacrificing public schools sacrifices the community. We call on the Tarrant Appraisal District Board of Directors to reverse course and engage in good-faith dialogue with school districts so children can receive the education they deserve.

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