

UEA Issue Brief

SB149: Teacher and Student Success Act



SB149: Teacher and Student Success Act, sponsored by Senator Ann Millner, adds an entirely new public education funding distribution method to several existing systems. The bill establishes the Teacher and Student Success Account (TSSA) to fund the new distribution system and requires each school to create an “outcome-based program plan” to access the money.

Background:

The TSSA concept was formed as part of a compromise with the 62nd Legislature in 2018 to deliver significant new funding to education. Integral to the compromise were a substantial tax increase and an agreement to direct more than \$800 million in new, ongoing revenue to the TSSA account. **Senate Bill 149 carries neither of these funding components** yet maintains the duplicative and prescriptive TSSA funding distribution system.

UEA’s Position: OPPOSE

The UEA opposes **SB149**. UEA has the following concerns about Senate Bill 149 and the TSSA alternate funding distribution method:

- SB149 is **redundant**. It creates yet another public education funding distribution method on top of the existing Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU), School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) and others.
- SB149 is **overly prescriptive**. The bill usurps control from locally elected school boards by defining what school boards and individual schools must do to receive funding.
- SB149 **creates additional bureaucracy**. The bill imposes an unnecessary new burden on schools and districts to create and manage plans in order to receive a funding distribution.
- SB149 is **unnecessary**. Given adequate funding, currently established financial distribution methods (like the WPU) can provide all the needed resources for student success.
- SB149 **inappropriately relies on test scores** as a primary measure of school success. Standardized test scores do not fully describe student learning or teaching effectiveness.

UEA’s Recommendations:

1. **Fund the WPU first.** Provide a minimum **6.5% increase on the WPU** this year, allowing local school districts maximum flexibility in addressing local needs.
2. **Use existing funding methods.** Rather than create an entirely new funding distribution system, the UEA believes new funding can easily be directed through existing distribution systems, with emphasis on the WPU.
3. **Shift ‘Flexible Allocation’ to the WPU.** Education Fund revenue currently in the Flexible Allocation line item should be shifted to the WPU. Distribute indexed property tax revenue to LEAs through the Flexible Allocation line item as ongoing money.
4. **Refer SB149 to Interim study.** The alternate funding mechanism proposed by SB149 represents a major shift in the way schools are funded. At a minimum, this decision should be referred to interim study where there can be substantive discussion about the most effective way to distribute new revenue generated by last year’s HB293 and the long-term effects of those tax changes can be determined and understood.

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