

April 4, 2023

To: House Public Education Committee

Re: Written Testimony Submitted FOR House Bill 11

My name is Cecilia Herrera. I am currently a 4th grade bilingual teacher at De Zavala Elementary in Midland ISD – the same school where I spent all of last year as a teacher resident thanks to a partnership with the University of Texas Permian Basin. More than 80% of the students I serve are considered Economically Disadvantaged and 40% are Emergent Bilingual Learners mastering two languages. I am honored to be here today to represent students who are so diverse, resilient, and eager to learn every day.

As a young wife and mother of three children, it took me many years to obtain my Bachelor's degree while supporting my family. When I finally was close to graduating, I was informed that I had to complete my student-teaching practice without pay. I couldn't afford to go 6 months without income to pay my mortgage, so I was thrilled to learn about and take the paid, yearlong residency route.

This was the best decision I could have made. The residency offered me powerful, firsthand insight into the art of teaching and equipped me with practical tools, strategies, and teaching methods that I could have not mastered through the traditional semester of student-teaching. I was surrounded by a group of highly qualified professionals at UTPB and an experienced mentor teacher who guided and prepared me to become an effective first-year teacher.

Through personalized coaching and feedback from Mrs. Ana Magallanes, I learned how to become a self-reflective practitioner and form deep connections with my students, families, and co-workers. I learned how to hold students to high academic expectations, analyze data to better inform my practices, and design lesson plans to provoke higher-order thinking. Now as a teacher of record, I rely on these skills and the confidence I gained to implement structures and procedures in my classroom and deliver engaging instruction to my students.

I believe all future educators should benefit from the rigorous, hands-on, and personalized preparation of a paid, yearlong residency. Because of this preparation, I will succeed and stay in the classroom for many years to come. My school also will benefit from its investment in my development. And most importantly, my future students will benefit from having a well-prepared, highly-qualified teacher.

On behalf of teacher residents and future Texas educators, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As you consider House Bill 11, I urge you to support the Teacher Residency Partnership program and allotment.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Herrera

4th Grade Bilingual Teacher, Midland ISD

Teacher Residency Completer, UT Permian Basin