



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JOE STRAUS
SPEAKER

October 26, 2016

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency
William B. Travis Building
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath:

The Members of the Texas House continue to be concerned that school districts are excluding students from needed special education services because those districts are trying to comply with the Texas Education Agency's monitoring system. I know that you share this concern and have been working diligently to gather comprehensive information about the monitoring system's impact. I want to thank you for those efforts, and I look forward to reviewing the findings that you will soon share with us.

The information that you gather will help all of us address this issue in the next legislative session. It will be a priority for the Texas House to make special education services available to all students who need them, while also ensuring that schools do not identify students for special education when it isn't appropriate. The House will work with TEA to find the right balance. But in the meantime, students should not be denied the services they need. I urge you, immediately, to either make significant changes to the specific indicator in the monitoring system that is being cited as a reason schools are denying needed services to students, or to suspend use of this indicator in the monitoring system until the Legislature and the agency can come up with a more lasting solution.

I understand that the system that has created so much concern was put in place by a previous Commissioner more than a decade ago. I also know that we don't want the pendulum to again swing too far toward over-populating special education, and that the enactment of a better system may require additional resources. These are all worthwhile concerns that we should discuss and consider in the months ahead. But we also know that every day in a child's education is important, and students shouldn't have to wait for the legislative process to run its course in order to get the educational help they need. That's why I am optimistic that you will take appropriate action, and it's why the House is committed to working with you in the months ahead so that all of us can better serve the children enrolled in our public schools.

Thank you for your consideration and for all that you and other educators are doing on behalf of Texas students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Straus".

Joe Straus
Speaker