



I have been around public education my entire life. My mother was a high school history teacher in Graham. I served on the school board when my children were in school. I have spent time as a tenured professor at the university level, as well. Education has been a very important and central part of my life.

Rural America makes up the backbone of our country, and often, local school districts are the largest employers in our rural communities. This is especially true here in House District 60, where we have 32 school districts across our eight counties.

When I decided to run for public office, I knew there was a need to address some of the problems in our state's public education system, especially in rural Texas. Once I was sworn into office, I began to work with my colleagues trying to address these concerns. This session, I have filed three pieces of legislation that I believe will make a difference in our schools.

House Bill 1870 would require students to take and pass a course on both the United States and Texas Constitution to graduate from high school. This would alleviate growing concerns that Texas and out-of-state transfer students lack a proper education in civics. Proper instruction in civics and constitutional principles have the potential to create strong foundations in understanding government, history, and policy before students enter the legal voting age.

House Bill 2557 would create a school security volunteer program. Concerns have been raised about the availability of school security personnel and about the effect of potential shortages on emergency response times for incidents involving schools, particularly in rural areas of Texas. The bill seeks to address these concerns by allowing a district to design a plan for honorably retired veterans or qualified retired law enforcement officers to provide campus security on a volunteer basis. This gives our rural districts the ability to implement a plan that works for their district.

House Bill 2766 addresses socioeconomic discrepancies in high school dual credit courses. Many rural low-socioeconomic high school students' GPAs, class rank, and subsequent automatic admission under the "top 10% law" are being adversely impacted by weighted dual credit courses due to lack of family and community college financial resources. HB 2766 creates a pilot program that seeks to correct this issue by establishing a grant fund to award economically disadvantaged high school students to pay for tuition and fees at small to medium-sized community colleges across the state.

Lastly, I am proud to co-author House Bill 5. This bill would greatly expand broadband Internet service access throughout the state, addressing one of Governor Greg Abbott's emergency legislative items. Communities in rural Texas often have limited, unreliable – if any – Internet

service. This inadequate access denies rural schools and students critical access to countless learning opportunities and puts them on unequal footing in comparison to urban areas. The Internet is the world's greatest source of information and all students deserve access to it.

Despite the chaos that 2020 and 2021 has brought us, education should remain at the top of our priority list. While these bills do not resolve all of the issues in our education system, they do make strides in addressing critical problems that our students face every day. Working to better our public education is a continuous task I am determined to keep at the forefront of the Texas Legislature's agenda.