



## Health-Care Costs & School Finance

Active school employees have not received an increase in state funding for health-insurance premiums in 16 years!

Yep, that's right, health insurance is now impossible to afford for many retirees.

Yep, that's right. The state is still pitching in only \$75 per month for each school employee--the same amount as when the program was created in 2001--even though healthcare costs have continued to rise for the past 16 years.

Pay raises for teachers and other school employees have been eaten up by added costs for insurance. The lack of state help is crushing our profession!

We are asking you to send your letter now urging significant new funding for school employee health care! Log on to our Texas AFT Page at [texasaft.org/campaigns](http://texasaft.org/campaigns) and click on the "*Are health-care costs crushing you?*" link.

Teachers and other school employees currently working in Texas classrooms bear the responsibility of paying for their own health insurance premiums with limited assistance from the state and employing school districts. The state amount and the minimum school district contribution for school-employee health insurance were set in 2001,

and 17 years later the combined total remains frozen at \$225 per month, despite years of increases in premiums and other healthcare costs. As a result, the amount many employees pay for premiums has quadrupled over that time, even while benefits have been cut. In the face of premium and out-of-pocket cost increases, active school employees are moving toward lower benefit healthcare plans or even dropping health insurance altogether.

The state maintains a separate TRS-Care health program for retired school employees. The state, active school employees, and local school districts all contribute to help offset retirees' premiums. Retirees pay substantial premiums and out-of-pocket costs out of their pension annuities, which have remained largely flat and have lost more than 20 percent of their purchasing power to inflation over the past dozen or so years. In 2015, the legislature provided enough funding to allow this program to limp forward but did not address the long term. In 2017, the legislature shifted a significant proportion of rising health costs onto retirees while reducing benefits for most. For many retirees, and active employees, the cost of decent coverage is now completely unaffordable.

State funding for healthcare programs for active and for retired school employees is simply not designed to keep pace with the historically



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## Continued

higher rate of increase in health-care costs. As a result, these programs are structurally imbalanced and need secure funding to make them reliable and sustainable.



## Texas AFT campaign for all school employees

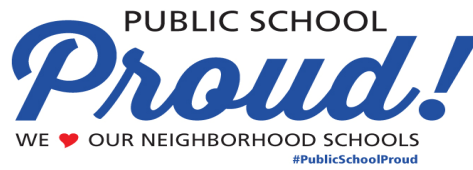
Although most of the media uses “teacher” in its headlines on the recent walkouts, this campaign is for all school employees. We also need to hear from librarians, custodians, secretaries and all the other hard-working school employees that keep our school ticking. (Yes, even principals and other administrative staff!)

Also, many people offered input with specific questions about things like hospital billing and networks. Even if we don’t publish your story, we’ll be looking into some of those concerns and passing them on to the appropriate state officials.

Log on to Texas AFT’s website, read the stories and share yours at:  
[texasaft.org/the-texas-teacher-speak-out](http://texasaft.org/the-texas-teacher-speak-out)

## Commission on school finance will take more time to hear testimony:

The Texas Commission on Public School Finance has decided to take more time to receive testimony and consider key issues before submitting its report and recommendations to the legislature before the 2019 legislative session.



At last week’s commission meeting, chair Scott Brister said the commission as a whole will keep taking testimony through the summer as working groups continue to develop recommendations in three policy areas: revenue, expenditures, and outcomes.

Those subgroup ideas will be presented to the full commission in the fall, and only then will the commission as a whole decide on its recommendations and draft its report, which is due by the end of the calendar year. Brister’s original timeline had the commission wrapping up its work by September, but as commission members have dug into the hard issues of school funding, they have come to a consensus on the need for more time.

## Planning and Preparation Time Online Petition.

*Section 21. 404 Planning and Preparation Time-- Each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.*

McAllen Independent School District Administrators have continuously violated the above-mentioned policy on multiple campuses. **Upon receipt of this signed [petition](#), McAllen AFT is asking the school board to demand that campus administrators cease and desist in violating this policy. [This petition will be presented to the McAllen ISD School Board along with the online results on May 29, 2018.](#)**