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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

AUSTIN, TX, March 21, 2018 – In its second draft of a corrective action plan ordered by the U.S. Department of Education, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) acknowledges its historic lack of leadership and guidance in the area of special education and the plan leaves the heavy lifting to local school districts. TCASE appreciates TEA’s stated commitment to significantly enhance its services and supports in order to improve student outcomes statewide.

The corrective action plan, which is embedded within a strategic plan with broader goals, is rich with school district monitoring and compliance measures, but fails to offer adequate financial and other support to districts.

Just Monday, the Texas Public School Finance Commission heard overwhelming public testimony that public education needs to be a state priority, and that districts are unfairly shouldering the financial burdens placed on them in a time of ever-changing expectations.

Meanwhile, TEA says this strategic plan draft has been designed to be “sustained with existing appropriations.” While we recognize that TEA can’t commit funds not already appropriated by the Texas Legislature or the U.S. Congress, directing districts to use existing appropriations for a plan such as this means services will be cut in other areas. Let’s be clear: without additional state money, the costs will impact ALL students, not just those with disabilities.

TCASE is committed to working with disability advocacy organizations, and we can all agree that schools will need appropriate financial resources and clear, consistent guidance to implement this plan. Our state leaders have a duty to support our public schools.

In the plan, school district responsibilities are outlined with words such as “require,” “must,” and “compliance.” In contrast, the document is riddled with activities TEA “may” do. It’s important to note that the state of Texas is the target of the corrective action plan. Local districts will clearly have an active role in its implementation, but it is confusing that many of the state level activities are non-committal while the district directives are mandatory.

Finally, a quote from Governor Abbott is referenced in the draft plan stating, “At the state and local level, the practices that led to the [Department of Education] monitoring letter will end.” We couldn’t agree more. School leaders, parents, and the Texas community at-large are united more than ever to make sure Texas students receive the education that this great state can offer. It is time for all of us to prove that ALL Texas students matter.

*The Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE) is a professional membership association comprised of about 1,100 school district leaders charged with special education in Texas public schools.*

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