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Rep. Bonnen and Sen. Taylor lead charge to secure funding for Santa Fe ISD

*Lawmakers work to secure funding for reconstruction and security hardening
improvements at District facilities in wake of tragic school shooting*

Austin, TX (March 26, 2019) – A supplemental appropriations bill that would provide Santa Fe ISD with more than \$10 million in post-disaster recovery cost reimbursement was overwhelmingly approved by the Texas Legislature’s House Appropriations Committee last week. The bill is scheduled to be heard on the House floor tomorrow, Wednesday, March 27.

“The legislature is working to strengthen and fund school safety across the state, but Santa Fe has endured an extraordinary tragedy and deserves our immediate support,” said Representative Greg Bonnen. “Santa Fe will never fully recover its losses, but with the adoption of SB500 the State can at least repay those financial costs incurred by the school district since last May.”

“The nearly \$11 million included in the current version of SB500 is meant to lessen the financial burden of the Santa Fe tragedy on the school district and the community,” said Senator Taylor. “My colleagues and I are working on numerous pieces of legislation to strengthen school safety across the state, but the legislature as a whole understands the particular strain this event has put on Santa Fe.”

Senate Bill 500 was voted out of the House Appropriations Committee on Monday, March 18, with unanimous support from 24 legislators, with three absent not voting. Bonnen, who Chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Article III and Taylor, who chairs the Senate Committee on Education, were instrumental in adding the appropriations specific to Santa Fe ISD, with support from House Appropriations Committee Chair John Zerwas.

“We are grateful for the continued support from our local elected officials, especially Representative Bonnen and Senator Taylor, who have worked very hard to ensure we can continue to provide a safe, healthy and supportive learning environment for our students,” said Santa Fe ISD Superintendent Dr. Leigh Wall. “As a local school district, we do not have the resources to adequately respond to and remediate the effects of such a horrific tragedy. This bill

will allow us access to funds that will help our community continue to heal, rebuild and appropriately honor and support all those affected.

The appropriations would permit the district access to funds to repay approximately \$3 million in security improvement costs that were incurred immediately following the tragic school shooting that occurred on May 18, 2018. The funds would also assist the District in reconstructing portions of Santa Fe High School where the shooting took place.

Once SB500 is heard on the House floor, it will still have a few remaining legislative hurdles to clear before being signed into law, including reconciliation of any differences with the Senate, as well as passage by the House and Senate of enabling legislation for the school safety appropriations.

Assuming the Santa Fe ISD funding remains intact and the bills pass the House and Senate, they will then be sent to Governor Abbott for signature, whose approval would make the District eligible to receive up to \$10,930,000 in appropriations for the current biennium for post-disaster recovery costs associated with last year's tragic event.

The regular session of the Legislature ends May 27, 2019.

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