



Senate Education Committee, May 7, 2019

Good afternoon! My name is Jennifer Lucy. I am the Director of Public Policy for TexProtects. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 18.

More than 24% of Texas children have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences that are likely affecting their ability to succeed in school. As a former educator, I would suggest that the percentage is much higher in many classrooms across this state.

These experiences can cause trauma that may lead to difficulties in learning, memory, social interaction, and self-regulation.

One of the effects of early and/or ongoing trauma is an overactivation of the brain's alarm systems meaning that these children may fight, freeze, or flee in circumstances that would not trigger the child sitting next to them. This is not because something is wrong with them. It is because of what has happened to them.

The good news is that we know that healthy relationships with supportive adults in safe environments can build the resilience and skills needed for children to overcome adversity and thrive. Simple, trauma-informed techniques can help children increase feelings of safety so that they can calm their "survival" brain, re-engage their "thinking" brain, and engage productively in the classroom.

HB 18 will ensure that school staff is equipped with evidence-informed training on how trauma affects our students and how to respond in ways that will de-escalate stressed responses, avoid retraumatizing our students, and increase connection. These trainings also help school staff understand which students may need opportunities to access resources outside of the classroom setting.

Trauma-informed approaches have the potential to increase positive outcomes among *all* students, regardless of trauma history. These strategies can increase student engagement and attendance, decrease referrals and suspensions, and accelerate academic success while minimizing the disruptions and conflicts that can interrupt a teacher's ability to deliver high quality academic content.

TexProtects looks forward to serving as a resource for the committee as you continue your work. Thank you for your extraordinary commitment to these issues and to the families and children of Texas.