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Oral Testimony – HB 4: Senate Education

Chandra Villanueva, CPPP Policy Analyst, villanueva@cppp.org

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential.

I am here to testify in support of HB 4 as a first step in improving Pre-K quality. However we still have concerns about this bill.

Quality teachers and a targeted curriculum are part of a high quality Pre-K program, but a full-day of instruction and low ratios are also important. Students are unable to benefit from improved teachers and curriculum if they are not there long enough to have meaningful interactions with the teacher or if the teacher is too overburdened with a large class size.

We also fear that this proposal may leave behind the districts with the greatest needs. All districts should be held to same high quality standards and funded accordingly.

It is also important to note that there has been some confusion about the level of funding provided by this bill. The bill language states that additional funding will be provided to qualifying students in Average Daily Attendance or ADA. Because Pre-K is a half-day program, two Pre-K students equal one ADA. It is unclear if the additional funding, not to exceed \$1,500 per student, is actually per student or per student in average daily attendance. If the additional funding is distributed by students in ADA, the actual per-student distribution would be only \$750.

It's not too late to strengthen this bill and ensure all eligible children have access to a high quality pre-k program.

We look forward to working with this committee to improve early education in Texas.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Oliver Bernstein at bernstein@cppp.org or 512.823.2875.

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