



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Senate Education Committee to discuss broadband services, graduation assessments, and vouchers

Austin – The Senate Committee on Education will hold hearings Tuesday and Wednesday to review interim charges related to broadband services, graduation assessments, and vouchers. The interim charges to be discussed are as follows:

Tuesday (Sept. 13, 2016)

- Evaluate digital learning opportunities in classrooms and examine existing barriers to schools' ability to provide a digital learning environment. In particular, study the availability of affordable broadband access to school districts across Texas. Examine different options for improving access to broadband service in all areas of the state, for districts and student homes. Make recommendations on a statewide plan for building the necessary infrastructure to provide a competitive, free-market environment in broadband service.
- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:
 - Legislation to establish criteria for alternative measures of assessments to meet high school graduation requirements.

Wednesday (Sept. 14, 2016)

- Study school choice programs enacted in states across the nation, examining education savings account and tax credit scholarship programs in particular. Examine the implementation process used in other states and what impact these programs have had on student academics and state and local district budgets. Make recommendations on which choice plan could best serve Texas students.
- Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following:

- Legislation establishing state intervention procedures for public schools with academically unsuccessful ratings of at least two consecutive school years; and providing school districts the ability to be designated as a district of innovation;
- Legislation to require a minimum number of minutes of instruction for each school year.

The hearings begin at **9 a.m. CST** in Austin (8 a.m. MST in El Paso), and may be viewed live online at the following link: <http://www.senate.texas.gov/bin/live.php>

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Texas Senate Democratic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.