

Hello,

My name is Juan G. Perez III I am a public High School Teacher from Edcouch-Elsa. I am here on my own behalf and would like to speak on my connection with public education. I am the son of migrant farm workers and was reared by a single mother in the small town of Edcouch-Elsa. My mother worked various part-time jobs to provide for our family. Growing up it was very difficult for my mother to make ends meet, but she always provided. I was reared in El Jardin Apartments and was raised on welfare. I have been everything from a field worker, road construction worker, to a black top roof sealer. I am proud of that work.

My saving grace and only vehicle to escape very challenging economic and social circumstances was the public school. I believe in public education as a vehicle for changing people, and that is why I chose to become an educator. I was inspired and guided by teachers who exhibited a “cause beyond oneself” and through public education was able to change my reality. I am a product of our public education system and now am a member of the teaching profession. If not for public education, I would not be who I am today. Now, I am here today because I am afraid that public education is headed in the wrong direction in Texas.

Our current accountability system is not only eroding public confidence in our educational system but it is demoralizing teachers, students, families, and communities. We must come up with a solution and restore confidence in our public education system because it is the only method in which students such as myself can escape their current reality and strive for a better life.

Let's prepare students to understand their own realities, rather than only the objectives on a test. Let's help them understand their strengths, rather than only their deficiencies or disaggregated limitations. Let's have a system that inspires students and those around them, rather than demoralize everyone in town. Let's uplift our public schools and restore faith in our democratic society.