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ATPE statement on Texas governor's school safety recommendations

AUSTIN, Texas— Earlier today, Texas Gov. **Greg Abbott** released a set of proposals designed to make Texas schools safer. Abbott's plan was formed after he hosted three successive school safety roundtable discussions in the wake of the shooting at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, on May 18.

Abbott solicited input from victims of shooting violence, law enforcement officials, students, families, lawmakers, and mental health experts, among others. We appreciate the fact that Governor Abbott consulted a broad group of stakeholders on this critical topic, but we are disappointed that the governor's office did not seek input from educators' associations such as the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE), which represents 100,000 public school employees in Texas.

The governor's proposals today will be implemented either immediately or considered when the 86th Texas Legislature reconvenes in January.

In light of Gov. Abbott's recommendations, ATPE has released a brief statement:

"The governor's recommendations come at a time when safety is of the utmost importance to Texas schools. ATPE applauds the conversations that were had about finding novel approaches to strengthening safety measures in Texas schools, even as we were not included in them.

ATPE has long advocated that school districts should decide what is important for their own peace of mind and communities, and we hope that the wishes of local school districts and their communities are respected during this process. We are pleased that the governor appears to be focusing on identifying and providing resources, including mental health interventions, rather than imposing mandates in dealing with this critical issue.

As the governor's proposals are implemented across Texas or put up to a vote in the next legislative session, adequate funding must accompany them. This will require our legislature and state leaders to take a comprehensive look at our school funding needs, which already have been inadequately addressed. The governor's new proposals will require, for instance, the hiring of additional staff and other interventions that will only increase the price tag of safely and effectively operating our public school system. We hope that educators will have a seat at the table for those weighty discussions, and we look forward to continuing to advocate for the well-being of all Texas students and school employees."

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About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

ATPE has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for Texas's five million public school students. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public education. Learn more about ATPE at atpe.org.