

To the Editor:

On May 26, 2021, United ISD held a special called meeting. On the agenda were two items dealing with a hiring freeze. Item VI.A., sponsored by Ramiro Veliz, Rick Rodriguez, and Ricardo Molina, was to freeze “all Directors, Principals, and Positions;” item VI.B., sponsored by Ramiro Veliz, Rick Rodriguez, and Roberto Ramirez, was to freeze “Non-instructional Hires.”

It is unbelievable that such actions would show up at a school board meeting agenda on the heels of the worse pandemic in over a century. Not only that, but the American Rescue Plan (ARP), Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Grant by the federal government allocated United ISD \$127,537,632 for the specific purpose of addressing the COVID-19 impacts that continue to plague our students and staff.

School districts must develop a plan, submit to TEA, and make publicly available on its website just how they intend to use these allocated ARP ESSER funds. These monies should be used to create safe and healthy learning environments by implementing COVID-19 prevention strategies to safely reopen schools that address both the physical and mental well-being of students and staff, including, but not limited to:

- Addressing the mental health needs of our students, including through funds used to hire counselors and other mental health practitioners
- Supporting the physical health needs of our students, including through funds used to hire additional nurse staff
- Hiring of campus-based instructional coaches and full-time mentors for new educators
- Adding additional interventionists to provide one-on-one or small group intensive supports during the school day
- Hiring paraprofessionals to support and co-lead small group learning

The list goes on. We know that our children, the students of UISD and LISD, have gone through unspeakable trauma. They have lost their resiliency. Their social, emotional, and mental needs have taken a direct hit! You can't achieve Bloom's Taxonomy without first satisfying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

In the end, Mr. Montemayor motioned to eliminate those two agenda items, seconded by Ms. Oliveros. All voted to do away with the idea of a hiring freeze, except Mr. Ricardo Molina.

In education,

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