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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 2002

I am writing to you today to alert you to ongoing issues in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) and financial happenings with our schools in the region. These issues are of the utmost importance to my office and constituents, and I therefore ask for the assistance of your department, including the Department of Education Office of Inspector General.

First, recent news stories have reported that Ector ISD had sent state funds to Third Future Schools, a charter school operator, in Colorado. The charter school operator had taken over schools in the district, but there are concerns that state or federal education dollars meant for our public schools were sent to a charter school. I would request that the Department of Education audit Ector ISD to ensure that all payments were appropriate in nature.

With the undemocratic takeover of HISD by the state of Texas, I have grave concerns about the financial wellbeing of the district. Widespread layoffs have been announced of widely acclaimed and beloved teachers, administrators, and staff members, leading to families protesting outside their neighborhood schools. Throughout the COVID pandemic, Congress sent unprecedented supplemental funding to the states to help support public education. In order to be sure these dollars reached their intended recipients and were spent in accordance with the wishes of Congress, I request that the Department of Education audit all supplemental funding throughout the pandemic that was sent to the State of Texas and meant for HISD. I request that you provide the dates when Texas received funding, the dates they disbursed funding to HISD, how HISD has spent those funds to date, and what the remaining balance of those funds is. It pains me that my home school district has been taken over and is seemingly being intentionally run into the ground and request any additional assistance you can provide to protect our schools and our students.

I understand that the Department of Education is critically important to the wellbeing of our future generations and ensuring that all stakeholders are good financial stewards of public funds is a part of that work. Houston is a vibrant and diverse community, and our state government is punishing us for that; we need your help. I welcome the opportunity to speak with you further on this matter. If my office can of any assistance, please contact my Chief of Staff, Chris McCarthy, at chris.mccarthy@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress