



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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TSTA: Legislature must increase state contribution to teacher health care

The Texas State Teachers Association today urged members of two key Texas House committees to recommend that the Legislature increase the state's contribution to health insurance costs for active school employees as well as retirees.

"For years, teachers and other school workers have seen rising health care costs dig deeper and deeper into their take-home pay, and that makes it harder to keep experienced, highly qualified teachers in our children's classrooms," said TSTA President Rita Haecker. "The state hasn't increased its health care contribution for active school employees in 12 years, and with another round of premium increases coming this fall, it is time for the legislature to act."

"The TRS-Care insurance program for retired teachers, many of whom are on fixed incomes, also faces financial difficulties that will require legislative action," Haecker added.

Some teachers with families will be paying \$900 or more a month – a huge chunk of their paychecks – for premiums under the state health insurance plan, TRS-ActiveCare, following a rate increase recently approved by the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. Employees in many larger school districts that provide their own insurance coverage have experienced similar premium increases.

The state contributes only \$75 a month, an amount that hasn't been increased since 2002, while premiums for some educators have increased by as much as 238 percent during the same period. School districts are required to cover at least \$150 per employee. Some contribute more, but many don't.

"These premium increases amount to pay cuts for school workers," Haecker added. "The average teacher in Texas is paid \$49,000 a year, about \$7,000 less than the national average."

The House Pensions Committee and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Pensions are holding a public hearing today on the affordability of health care for public school employees and retirees.