March 16, 2021

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the Public Education Committee:

The below organizations respectfully oppose House Bill 759, relating to the establishment of a student threat assessment database. A threat assessment database is unnecessary and concerning because it risks students' data privacy and protections and exacerbates disciplinary inequities that affect Black and Latino students, and students with disabilities.

This bill is unnecessary and could risk students' privacy. Legal requirements for school safety data are already included in statute (CCP Art. 15.27). An additional database would be redundant to current data monitoring systems, and risks violating students' privacy by sharing sensitive information with law enforcement officials. This cumulative record could also hurt students' postsecondary opportunities.

This bill exacerbates disciplinary inequities. Data show that Black and Latino students and students with a disability are disproportionately represented in every type of school discipline referral. This includes in-school-suspensions to referrals to disciplinary alternative education programs and juvenile justice alternative education programs, to Class C misdemeanor citations, despite research showing that their behavior at school is no different than that of their white peers.

HB 759 would disproportionately harm Black and Latino students, students who have a disability, students with mental health, and students from low-income backgrounds. Please vote against HB 759.

Signed:
Federation of Families- Texas
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)
Texans Care for Children
Texas Appleseed
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
Mental Health America of Greater Houston
The Arc of Texas
The Education Trust in Texas
PODER
ONE Houston
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)
Leadership ISD
Dallas CORE
Latinos for Education