

# IN INAUGURAL YEAR, TEXAS EDUCATORS STRENGTHEN TEACHER PREPARATION

## OUR IMPACT

Texas is home to more than five million students, 60 percent of them economically disadvantaged. Across the state, 30,000 first-year teachers are trained by 231 preparation programs of widely-disparate quality. Teach Plus teachers knew they had to do better—and built incredible momentum in Teach Plus' launch year in the Lone Star state.

The Fellows advocated for two bills to improve teacher preparation, and against one that would have lowered already-weak program standards. In a famously raucous session, **the two teacher preparation bills teachers supported passed, and the bill they opposed was defeated.**

The two bills that teachers advocated for will:

- + Improve data transparency, giving preparation programs the data they need to improve.
- + Reduce unnecessary hurdles to permit experienced teachers from out-of-state to teach in Texas.
- + Create an early childhood certification so that children learn reading, numeracy, and social emotional skills from well-prepared teachers.



## HOW WE GOT THERE

In September 2016, Teach Plus launched a Teach Plus Texas Advisory Board made up of 18 teachers dedicated to exploring the opportunity for teacher voice and advocacy in Texas. In May 2017, we inaugurated the Teach Plus Texas Teaching Policy Fellowship with 30 demonstrably-effective teacher leaders from traditional district and charter schools across the state.

During the 2017 legislative session, Teach Plus teachers identified three Texas bills that would improve—or diminish—Texas' haphazard system of teacher preparation. Fellow **Laura Laywell**, who testified before the House Public Education Committee and published an op-ed in the *Huffington Post*, was featured in the *Dallas Morning News* for her effective advocacy. *"Preparation matters,"* she told the paper.

Working alongside partner organizations, teachers testified in front of House and Senate committees of the Texas legislature, and participated in highly-attended legislative briefings. Throughout the fast-moving legislative session, teachers held meetings with legislators and their staff members, telling powerful stories from the field.

Teach Plus Texas teachers published op-eds in the *Austin-American Statesman*, the *Houston Chronicle*, *The Texas Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Huffington Post*, and were featured in publications ranging from the *Dallas Morning News* to *Austin Monthly*.

**In just one year, Teach Plus proved that prospects are better for students with Texas teachers at the table.**

*No student should go through the disruption of having five math teachers in one year. While policymakers are gathered for the 2017 Texas legislative session, a discussion about teacher preparation, which directly affects teacher retention, is of critical importance.*

— Rio Grande teacher **Plácido Gómez** in an op-ed in the *Texas Tribune*.

Houston teacher **Shontoria Walker** published op-eds on teaching through the lens of social justice in *The Houston Chronicle* and *The Christian Science Monitor* and met with her state representative to advocate for high-quality teacher preparation. In a briefing at the Texas Capitol, Shontoria told legislators and staff members, “**We use data to drive our instruction, why not also use it to drive our teacher preparation programs?**”



# 70

meetings with  
legislators.

# 75+

in attendance at  
legislative briefings.

# 12

teachers testifying  
before Texas House  
and Senate Education  
Committees.

# 9

op-eds in major  
publications.

**José Manuel Rodríguez**, an elementary ESL teacher in Leander and former U.S. Marine, testified before the Texas Senate Education Committee in support of SB1839, the bill designed to improve teacher preparation. Detailing the flimsy preparation that he received as a career-changer, José conducted numerous meetings with decision-makers as they considered this legislation.

