Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Mike Morath

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Via E-Mail,
Certified Mail &
Regular Mail

220-905

March 24, 2026

Dr. Karen Molinar, Superintendent
Roxanne Martinez, Board President
Tobi Jackson, First Vice President
Dr. Michael Ryan, Second Vice President
Anael Luebanos, Board Secretary
Anne Darr, Trustee
Kevin Lynch, Trustee
Quinton Phillips, Trustee
Dr. Camille Rodriguez, Trustee
Fort Worth Independent School District
7060 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth, Texas 76116

RE: Appointment of Board of Managers and Superintendent

Dear Superintendent Molinar and Trustees:

In correspondence on November 6, 2025, following an informal review, I notified the Fort Worth Independent School District ("ISD" or "district") of my decision to appoint a board of managers and superintendent to the district based on the unacceptable performance of one of the district's campuses for five consecutive school years. Additionally, I appointed a conservator to the district to ensure the district supports its low-performing campuses and implements the district's turnaround plans. The correspondence also notified the district of the opportunity to request an administrative review of the appointment of a conservator and a board of managers decision to the State Office of Administrative Hearings ("SOAH").[1]

The district timely petitioned for a SOAH review. Following an administrative hearing before SOAH, the administrative law judge issued a final order on February 5, 2026, ruling in favor of the Texas

[1] Texas Education Code (TEC) §39A.301, and 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§157.1151(7), (9), 157.1155(a) and (b).

Education Agency ("TEA" or "agency").[2] The decision of the administrative law judge is final and may not be appealed.[3]

Since November, the TEA has conducted a comprehensive application, selection, and training process to identify and select qualified members to serve on the board of managers. I am hereby appointing the following nine individuals to serve on the board of managers:

- **Pete Geren (recommended to serve as Board President):** A Fort Worth native and proud Arlington Heights Yellow Jacket, Pete Geren has worked extensively with education partners, non-profit organizations, and community leaders to build a literacy ecosystem in the broader Fort Worth community. Currently the president and CEO of a Fort Worth-based non-profit, Geren worked more than eight years in the Department of Defense under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Prior to that, Geren represented Fort Worth in Congress for four terms and served as a lawyer and business executive. He earned degrees in history and law from the University of Texas at Austin.

- **Courtney Lewis (recommended to serve as Board Vice President):** A finance and banking professional, Courtney Lewis is actively engaged in the Fort Worth civic and non-profit space. She currently serves on the boards of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and Housing Channel and is an active member of the Rotary Club of Fort Worth, Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) DFW and Women Steering Business.

- **Rosa Maria Berdeja (recommended to serve as Board Secretary):** Rosa Maria Berdeja has called the Fort Worth-area home for more than three decades. The sixth of nine children, she was the first in her family to both graduate high school and pursue higher education. An attorney, Berdeja serves as Chair-Elect of the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Recovery Resource Council. She holds degrees from the University of North Texas and Texas A&M University School of Law.

- **Bobby Ahdieh:** A higher education leader, Bobby Ahdieh arrived in Fort Worth in 2018 to serve as the Dean of the Texas A&M University School of Law, a role that has grown to oversee the training of graduate students across the healthcare, energy, and finance sectors as Chief Operating Officer of Texas A&M University – Fort Worth. Ahdieh holds degrees from Princeton University and Yale Law School.

- **Jay Stegall:** A business operations veteran in the restaurant, retail, and consumer packaged goods industries, Jay Stegall leverages his professional experience in strategic planning and leadership toward serving his community. A Fort Worth native and proud husband, father and grandfather, he holds a bachelor's degree from Stephen F. Austin State University and a Master of Business Administration from Texas Christian University.

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[2] TEC §39A.301(c)(3) and 19 TAC §157.1171(b).

[3] TEC §39A.301(c)(3) and 19 TAC §157.1171(b).

- **Frost Prioleau:** Guided by the philosophy of servant leadership, Frost Prioleau spent more than 35 years building successful, high-growth technology companies. A graduate of Princeton University, he and his wife Martha have called Fort Worth home for nearly 25 years.

- **Tennessee Walker:** A parent of three children enrolled in Fort Worth ISD schools, Tennessee Walker is an attorney and serves as the board chair for Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Greater Tarrant County. He has been actively involved in BBBS for more than 15 years, twice serving as a Big Brother in the program. Walker holds degrees from Texas A&M University and Baylor University School of Law.

- **Luis A. Galindo:** A practicing attorney for more than 35 years in the construction, business and real estate arenas, Luis A. Galindo has been involved in numerous community advocacy and philanthropic organizations in Fort Worth. In addition to his law practice, Galindo is an adjunct supervising attorney at the Texas A&M School of Law's Entrepreneurship Law Clinic and teaches Business Law at Texas Wesleyan University. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at El Paso and a Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law.

- **Laurie George:** A current Fort Worth ISD parent and former educator with more than a decade of experience working in public education, Laurie George brings significant experience supporting multilingual learners and students with disabilities across K-12 systems. A graduate of Oregon State University, George is a teaching fellow and pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of North Texas.

These members of the board of managers will be responsible for governing the district, and they will provide the leadership needed to work towards positive change for all students who attend Fort Worth ISD schools. Accordingly, with this appointment of a board of managers, the powers of the district's board of trustees are HEREBY SUSPENDED until further notice and for the duration of the tenure of the board of managers.[4]

State law also requires that I appoint a superintendent.[5] Under that authority, I hereby appoint Dr. Peter B. Licata as Superintendent of Fort Worth ISD, effective immediately and with the full authority, rights, and responsibilities as permitted under the Texas Education Code.[6]

Dr. Licata is a student-centered leader with more than 30 years of experience improving outcomes for students. Most recently, he served as Superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in Florida, the nation's sixth-largest district, where he led the district to its first state "A" rating in more than 14 years. Over the course of his career, Dr. Licata has served as a teacher, coach, principal, regional superintendent, assistant superintendent, and university professor. He is known for aligning budgets, staffing, and instructional priorities to the needs of students while strengthening

[4] TEC §39A.202(a)(1).
[5] TEC §39A.202(a)(2).
[6] 19 TAC §97.1073(f).

accountability and transparency. Dr. Licata's leadership experience and proven focus on academic improvements will be a critical asset to advancing student success across Fort Worth ISD.

I want to thank the district's former superintendent, Dr. Karen Molinar, for her leadership and professionalism, and her steadfast commitment to the district. Dr. Molinar served the students and community of Fort Worth ISD with integrity and a consistent focus on advancing student success, and the district is in a stronger position today than two years ago because of her leadership.

Christopher Ruszkowski will continue to serve as the appointed conservator to the district. He will assist with the board transition, while retaining his existing authority and responsibilities.

The appointment of a board of managers to a district is not permanent, and state law sets forth a timeline that governs the board's return to elected control.[7] Since the board will return to elected control, trustee elections will continue during the tenure of the board of managers. My hope is that members of the board of trustees will remain engaged in an advisory capacity so that the transition will be seamless when the time comes for the elected officials to return to the board.

I wish Dr. Licata and the board of managers all my best. It is my sincere hope that all parties work together in a cooperative and productive manner to address the current and future needs of all the district's students.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

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[7] TEC §39A.208(b).