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PRESS RELEASE

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SEN. LUCIO FILES BILL FOR SCHOOL START AFTER LABOR DAY

AUSTIN, TX—Buoyed by growing support for a uniform and later school start date from the House of Representatives and the Texas legislative leadership, Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr. today filed a bill requiring all public schools to begin classes on the first Tuesday after Labor Day.

"I think the Texas Legislature has finally realized the value of giving public school children back their summers, families their time together and the children of migrant workers more opportunity for equal classroom time through the inclusion of a school start date in House Bill 2, the public education and public school finance bill," said Sen. Lucio. "Senate Bill 510 will mean more dollars staying in the school district instead of going to pay high bills for air conditioning and other utilities during the hottest months of the year, when classes currently start.

Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn has identified \$790 million in annual costs for school operations and utilities, loss of migrant income, additional child care for parents and teachers, and diminished tourism from early start dates.

"At a time when we are debating public school finance and looking for areas of cost-savings, this is one place where we can certainly cut back," said Sen. Lucio. "I've been pushing for a more sensible school start date since 1997, and I'm ecstatic to see that the years of effort and hard work may finally pay off."

One of the Senator's primary motivations for implementing a later start date has been to assist migrant students. He noted, "Migrant students, who are no longer concentrated just along the Border, face so many hurdles in trying to obtain an education. When they return late in the fall from working up north with their families, they face the burden of making up days and even weeks of classroom instruction, which often demoralizes and hampers the learning ability of a young person."

Sen. Lucio also emphasized that a later start date can mean a tremendous benefit to tourism—an industry that provides jobs for teenagers and college students, pumps revenues into communities and provides safe entertainment for families. Students often rely on summer to find 40-hour-a-week jobs they normally can't work during the school year. They often use the summer income to help pay for their education and to help out at home, so they depend on vacation spots such as Schlitterbahn (in New Braunfels and South Padre Island), Six Flags Over Texas, Astroworld, Fiesta, Sea World and South Padre Island for this employment.

Current law requires schools to start classes no earlier than the week in which August 21 falls (with Sunday as the first day of the week), but allows schools to apply for waivers after holding public hearings on the proposed date (SB 108—77th session).