To: All Texas School Board Members  
From: Texas Chaplains  
Re: Reject public school chaplain programs  
Date: September 12, 2023

We, the undersigned chaplains, write in response to the Texas Legislature’s recent passage of SB 763, requiring school districts to vote on whether to create a paid or volunteer chaplain program to “provide support, services, and programs for students.”

Because of our training and experience, we know that chaplains are not a replacement for school counselors or safety measures in our public schools, and we urge you to reject this flawed policy option: **It is harmful to our public schools and the students and families they serve.**

There is no requirement in this law that the chaplains refrain from proselytizing while at schools or that they serve students from different religious backgrounds.

The law provides for chaplain salaries to be drawn from funds designated “to improve school safety and security.” Those funds are directed at – but not limited to – the roles of restorative discipline and justice practices, mental and behavioral health support, and suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. We are deeply concerned about using chaplains in these roles to provide those services, particularly as the law does not require any specific training or qualifications.

**SB 763 allows a school district to give any employee or volunteer who can pass a background check the title of “chaplain.” This is simply not enough.** Professional chaplains have specific education and expertise to fulfill our role in helping others engage their own religious practices and traditions. Typically, we are required to have a graduate theological degree and be supported by an approved organization connected to our spiritual tradition. In some settings, chaplains also must have one to two years of full-time experience as a religious or spiritual leader. Many of us are ordained in our faith tradition. Additionally, board certified chaplains in health care go through a rigorous certification process, pursuing hundreds of hours of extensive training and hands-on experience.

Our extensive training empowers us to follow the lead of the individuals seeking our spiritual care without imposing our own faith tradition upon them. For example, a Jewish military chaplain will advocate that a Muslim service member be able to pray the five daily prayers while deployed. A Christian hospital chaplain will help an atheist patient explain to her family her peace of mind that there is no afterlife.
As trained chaplains, we are not qualified for the duties envisioned by SB 763. We cooperate with mental health counselors – we do not compete with them. Further, professions which help children with sensitive matters, such as therapists and police investigators, typically require special training on how to interview and treat juveniles. Few chaplains have this expertise. Finally, using the school safety allotment to pay for chaplains is wholly inappropriate.

Chaplaincy programs do not train chaplains on active shooter situations or to be public safety professionals.

As trained chaplains, we strongly caution against the government assertion of authority for the spiritual development and formation of our public school children. We would never provide spiritual care to someone without their consent. And when children are involved, parental consent is necessary. Not only are chaplains serving in public schools likely to bring about conflict with the religious beliefs of parents, but chaplains serving in public schools would also amount to spiritual malpractice by the chaplains.

Government-sanctioned chaplains make sense in some settings, but not in our public schools. Many of us serve in contexts in which individuals cannot access their religious services — such as the military, a prison, or hospital — which is hardly the case for children in public school. Military members may have security or language barriers in finding a house of worship while on deployment. Incarcerated individuals are not given a “religious hall pass” to leave prison and attend the corporate worship service of their own choosing. Hospitalized patients may be too sick or far away from their congregations to engage in meaningful religious exercise.

Public school children simply do not face the barriers to religious exercise that service members, prisoners, and patients face. Parents or guardians must have the right to choose the religious leaders who will influence their children’s spiritual journey. Public schools should not interfere or alter parental decisions in the realm of religious exercise or spiritual care.

We are chaplains from a diversity of faith or ethical traditions living in or educated in Texas. We proudly serve(d) in various capacities, including as hospice, hospital, military, prison, or university chaplains.

We urge you to support religious freedom and parental rights by rejecting this harmful program to have government-approved chaplains in our public schools. We believe that a strong public school system is one in which the limited funding for safety and security of students is used to hire the most skilled professionals for those roles. We believe that families, not the government, are entrusted with their children’s spiritual development.

Respectfully,

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Rev. Sue Abold
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Austin ISD
St. Edward’s University, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. Jann Aldredge-Clanton
Alliance of Baptists
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Cantor Sheri Allen
Jewish
Hospice Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD

Ashley Hood
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
Congregational Chaplain
University of Texas

Rev. Stacy Auld
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Houston ISD, Alvin ISD
Texas A&M University

Dara Austin
The United Methodist Church
Educational Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Baylor University, Brite Divinity School

Rev. Tricia Baldwin
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Corporate Chaplain
Crowley ISD
University of North Texas

Nancy Barnard
Unitarian Universalist
Healthcare Chaplain
Austin ISD
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Michael Bartley
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Corporate Chaplain
Wimberley ISD

Ms. Sarah Berel-Harrop
Unitarian Universalist
Healthcare Chaplain
Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD
University of Texas at Austin

Paulette Bilby
The Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
Georgetown ISD
Seminary of the Southwest

Rev. Todd Boling
Baptist
Educational Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD

Andrew Bowles
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Baylor University

Rev. Amy Branch-Lambert
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
Grapevine Colleyville ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Dallas ISD
Joshua Bridges-Hickey  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Brite Divinity School

Dr. Fredricc Gerard Brock  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Military, Educational Chaplain  
Northside ISD  
Texas Southern University, George W. Truett Theological Seminary

Rev. Joyce Brooks  
The African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Private Chaplain  
Conroe ISD  
Southern Methodist University

Dr. Chaplain Jim Browning COL, USAF  
Ret.  
Baptist General Convention of Texas  
Military Chaplain  
Floresville ISD  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Rev. Susan Bryan  
The United Methodist Church  
Hospice Chaplain  
Frisco ISD  
Texas Woman’s University

Jonah Bryant  
Non-Denominational Christian  
Military, Healthcare Chaplain  
Midlothian ISD

Lauren Buck Medeiros  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ  
Educational Chaplain  
Brite Divinity School, Perkins School of Theology

Rev. Kristin Burrow  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Fort Worth ISD  
Texas Christian University

Rev. Sarah Caine  
Unitarian Universalist  
Military, Healthcare Chaplain  
San Antonio ISD

Dr. Ryan Campbell  
Catholic  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Plano ISD  
Richland College, Austin College, University of Dallas

Michael Carter  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Dallas ISD  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Rev. Michael Chalk  
The Episcopal Church  
Private Chaplain  
Alamo Heights ISD  
North Texas State University
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Clark</td>
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<td>Rev. Jeni Cook</td>
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<td>Sara Cowley</td>
<td>The United Methodist Church</td>
<td>Mesquite ISD, Texas Christian University</td>
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<td>Ken Crawford</td>
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<td>Allen ISD</td>
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<td>Donna Dickerson</td>
<td>Quaker</td>
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<td>The Episcopal Church</td>
<td>Georgetown ISD</td>
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<td>Vicki Dullye</td>
<td>Alliance of Baptist</td>
<td>Northwest ISD</td>
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<td>Rev. Tracy Dunn</td>
<td>Cooperative Baptist Fellowship</td>
<td>Fort Worth ISD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Byron Durant</td>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventist</td>
<td>Mansfield ISD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Diana Dworin</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>University of Texas at Austin, Seminary of the Southwest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raye Nell Dyer</td>
<td>Alliance of Baptists</td>
<td>Sam Houston State University</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs**
Rev. Dr. Mitzi Ellington  
Alliance of Baptists  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Fort Worth ISD  
Texas Christian University  

Chaplain Alton Ethridge  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Military, Healthcare, Educational Chaplain  
Bell County ISD  

Dr. Pam Foster  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Northwest ISD  
Hardin Simmons University  

Emily Gabehart-Weuste  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Fort Worth ISD  
Texas Christian University  

Elisabeth Garvin  
The United Methodist Church  
Educational Chaplain  
Dallas ISD  

Rev. Alicia Gomes  
The Episcopal Church  
Educational Chaplain  
Seminary of the Southwest  

Rev. Charles Graves IV  
The Episcopal Church  
Educational Chaplain  
Houston ISD  

Rev. Krista Gregory  
Alliance of Baptists  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Austin ISD  
Texas A&M University, Southwestern  
Baptist Theological Seminary  

Rev. LeAnn Griffin  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Arlington ISD  
University of North Texas, Texas Christian  
University  

Rev. Kirsten Hancock  
Baptist  
Hospice Chaplain  
San Antonio ISD  
Baylor University  

Rev. Jody Harrison  
Baptist  
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain  
Austin ISD  
Texas State University, Seminary of the  
Southwest  

Dr. Mark Hart  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Boerne ISD  
Brite Divinity School  

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Autumn Hendon</td>
<td>Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Houston ISD</td>
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<td>Howard Payne University, George W. Truett</td>
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<td>Dr. R. Dawn Hood-Patterson</td>
<td>Alliance of Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Dallas ISD</td>
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<td>Erin Hensley</td>
<td>The Episcopal Church Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Jonathan Hodson</td>
<td>Jewish Congregational Chaplain</td>
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<td>Andrea Holamon</td>
<td>Christian Educational Chaplain</td>
<td>Rice University</td>
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<td>Carrie Holley-Hurt</td>
<td>Unitarian Universalist Parish Chaplain</td>
<td>San Antonio Northeast ISD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Mark Holmes</td>
<td>American Baptist Church USA Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Baylor University</td>
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<td>Paul Hood-Patterson</td>
<td>Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Richardson ISD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Maggie Johnson</td>
<td>American Baptist Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain</td>
<td>Houston ISD</td>
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</table>

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Remington Johnson
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Conroe ISD
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Rev. Travis Johnson-Esparza
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
Alamo Heights ISD
Seminary of the Southwest

Rev. Dr. Paul Kraus
American Baptist (ABC-USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
Austin ISD
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Rabbi Nancy Kasten
Jewish
Private Chaplain
Dallas ISD

Michael Kushnick
Jewish
Educational Chaplain
Plano ISD

Kara Kaufmann
Atheist
Private Chaplain
Corpus Christi ISD

Sheri Hollingsworth Lake
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Waxahachie ISD, Arlington ISD, Mansfield ISD, Benbrook ISD, Plano ISD, Highland Park ISD, Red Oak ISD, Richardson ISD
Texas Christian University, Southern Methodist University

Rev. Robert Kidd
The Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Houston ISD

Rev. Lee Legault
Unitarian Universalist
Healthcare Chaplain
Round Rock ISD
University of Texas at Austin, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Mrs. Sandra Killoran
Catholic
Board Certified Hospice Chaplain
Northeast ISD

Kelly Levy
Jewish
Private Chaplain
Texas Tech University

Rev. Kristin Klade
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Board Certified Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Rev. Sandra Londa
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Wimberley ISD
Perkins School of Theology

Rev. April Long
Federation of Christian Ministries
Hospice Chaplain
Austin ISD
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Debra Loudin-McCann
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Chaplain
Richardson ISD
Perkins School of Theology

Adam Lubbers
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Wylie ISD
Abilene Christian University, Southern Methodist University

Britt Luby
Catholic
Healthcare Chaplain
Arlington ISD
Texas Christian University

Alexis Lustig
Adventist
Healthcare Chaplain
Southwestern Adventist University

Rev. Kurt Maerschel
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Richardson ISD
Southern Methodist University

Rev. Dr. Michael Maness
Baptist
Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
Woodville ISD
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Rev. Ann Carol Mann
Alliance of Baptists
Healthcare Chaplain
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Feby Mathew
Healthcare Chaplain
Lewisville ISD

Rev. Donna Mayfield
The Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
Seminary of the Southwest

Kasey McCollum
Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
Kenedale ISD
Abilene Christian University

Benjamin McCoy
The Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Southern Methodist University
Rev. Lea McCracken
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Educational Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD
Texas Christian University

Nicole McRaney
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare Chaplain
Brite Divinity School

Rev. Linda McWhorter
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Board Certified Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Killeen ISD

Rev. Blake Miller
Baptist
Corporate Chaplain
Dallas ISD

Sarah Miller
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
Waco ISD
Baylor University

Delynda Moravec
The Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Lovejoy ISD

Rev. Trey Morrison
Baptist
Healthcare, Educational Chaplain
Baylor University

Dr. Mike Mullender
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD
Baylor University

Rev. Aaron Mussat
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
Athens ISD
George W. Truett Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. Chad Mustain
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain
Plano ISD
Baylor University, Texas Christian University

Sarah Neeley
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Mineola ISD
Baylor University

Drew Nelson
Christian
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Jarrell ISD

Lucas Neville
United Church of Christ
Healthcare, Hospice Correctional and Rehabilitation, State Chaplain
Brite Divinity School, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dallas Baptist University

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Rev. Caroline Noll
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Plano ISD
Texas A&M University, Perkins School of Theology

Rev. Staci Orr
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Denton ISD
Southern Methodist University

Rev. David Owen
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Hospice Chaplain
Lexington ISD
Texas Christian University

Beatriz Pacheco
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Southern Methodist University

Andrew Paley
Jewish
City Law Enforcement and Federal Law Enforcement Chaplain
Dallas ISD

Rev. Randolph Parks
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
Baylor University

Rev. Nancy Piggott
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
Austin ISD

Rev. Megan Pike
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain
George W. Truett Theological Seminary

Alicia Po Ching
Assemblies of God
Healthcare Chaplain
Red Oak ISD

Jeremy Pope
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Board Certified Hospice Chaplain
Fort Worth ISD
Dallas Baptist University

Luis Priego
Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD

Rev. Ken Ramsey
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD
Baylor University

Rev. Dr. Lee Ann Rathbun
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain
Leander ISD
Baylor University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Jimmie Reese
The United Methodist Church
Educational Chaplain
Jacksonville ISD
University of Houston, Texas Southern University, University of St. Thomas, Southern Methodist University

Rev. Deborah Reeves
Baptist
Board Certified Chaplain
Dripping Springs ISD

Rev. Dr. Robert Renix
Alliance of Baptists
Healthcare, Educational Chaplain
Red Oak ISD

Rachel Rigdon
The United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
Northwest ISD
Southern Methodist University

Julie Riley
Presbyterian
Healthcare Chaplain
Irving ISD
Austin College

Rev. Calia Rodriguez
Free Methodist
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
Perkins School of Theology

Rev. Dr. Cody Sanders
Alliance of Baptists
Chaplaincy Educator
Brite Divinity School

Elizabeth Lee Self
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare Chaplain
Lake Dallas ISD
Brite Divinity School

Robert Sharff
Jewish
Healthcare, Military Chaplain
Spring ISD

Rev. Katrina Shawgo
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Hospice Chaplain
Pflugerville ISD
University of North Texas

Rev. Matthew Silker
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
Georgetown ISD

Rev. Shelley Simmont
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
New Braunfels ISD
Texas Lutheran University

Rev. Jeffrey Sims
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Covington ISD

Rev. W. Christopher Sims
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
Fort Bend ISD

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Dr. Leslie Sinclair-Worley</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary</td>
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<td>Rev. Tom Stephenson</td>
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<td>Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Rev. Leslie Smith</td>
<td>The United Methodist Church Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>McKinney ISD Perkins School of Theology</td>
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<td>Rev. Theodore Smith</td>
<td>The United Methodist Church Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>Houston ISD Perkins School of Theology, SMU</td>
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<td>Non-Denominational Christian Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Tyler ISD</td>
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<td>Noah Stansbury</td>
<td>The Episcopal Church Educational Chaplain</td>
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Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Rev. Johnny Taylor
Southern Baptist Convention
Healthcare Chaplain
Plano ISD

Rev. Lisa Test
The United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Plano ISD
Perkins School of Theology

Michele Thompson
Church of Christ
Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain
Austin ISD
St. Edwards, Seminary of the Southwest

Tamara Thompson
Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
Houston ISD
Abilene Christian University

Rev. Reann Tiemann
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Richardson ISD

Chelsea Turpen
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
Dallas ISD
George W. Truett Theological Seminary

Samuel Turpen
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Hospice Chaplain
Dallas ISD

Rev. Dr. Carlos Valencia
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Crowley ISD
Baptist University of the Americas

Frank Vasquez
Non-Denominational Christian
Healthcare Chaplain
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Rev. Heather Velez
The United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
Lamar Consolidated ISD
Southern Methodist University

Tricia Vincent
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
Forney ISD
Dallas Theological Seminary

Rev. Melissa Walker-Luckett
Alliance of Baptists
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
Ferris ISD

Rev. Dr. Cindy Wallace
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
George W. Truett Theological Seminary,
Baylor University

Rev. Erin Walter
Unitarian Universalist
Civic Chaplain
Austin ISD
Rev. Melissa Watts  
United Church of Christ  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Richardson ISD  
Hardin Simmons University

Rev. Melissa Watts  
United Church of Christ  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Richardson ISD  
Hardin Simmons University

Rev. Dr. James Wright  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Austin ISD  
University of North Texas

Amanda Wertz  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD  
University of Texas, Brite Divinity School

Rev. Mike Wright-Chapman  
United Church of Christ  
Hospice Chaplain  
Mansfield ISD  
Texas Wesleyan University, Brite Divinity School

Rev. Deborah Whisnand  
United Church of Christ  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Houston ISD  
Texas Tech University, Rice University

Marina Yergin  
Jewish  
Educational Chaplain  
Judson ISD, North East ISD, San Antonio ISD, Alamo Heights ISD

Rev. Linda Wilkerson  
Texas Baptist General Convention  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Dallas ISD

Rev. Paul Yu-Angel  
United Church of Christ  
Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain  
Plano ISD

Rev. Dr. Christy Wood  
United Church of Christ  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Houston Christian University, Baylor University

Rabbi Brian Zimmerman  
Jewish  
Congregational Chaplain  
Fort Worth ISD

Rev. Alan Wright  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
Wylie ISD  
Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University

Texas Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs