ALEJANDRO PEÑA

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PROFILE

Former Texas House Legislative Director and lead House legislative agent for the Texas American Federation of Teachers (Texas AFT), with 11+ years in state policy. Bring broad policy knowledge, quantitative analysis skills, and extensive Capitol and stakeholder relationships to legislative strategy, staff leadership, and constituent service. Use Python and SQL to turn complex public data into clear analysis and practical tools for policy and advocacy.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & Principal Consultant

Data for Public Education | Austin, Texas *Oct. 2024–Present*

- Founded an applied research practice serving Texas AFT, Our Schools, Our Democracy (OSOD), and other nonprofits. Scope projects, define deliverables, and coordinate feedback and deadlines for school finance, staffing, accountability, enrollment and student transfer patterns, charter school, and school closure research.
- Modeled House Bill 2 (89-R) paraprofessional raise scenarios for 1,179 local education agencies and separately analyzed teacher retention funding for Texas AFT. Documented formula and implementation issues, data anomalies, and fallback rules; produced audit workbooks, one-page summaries, and customized reports for local union leaders; coordinated district roster review and publication, corrected reports and graphics, and communicated revisions.
- Conducted all quantitative research and analysis for OSOD's *Facing Facts: Charter Schools in Texas*, a statewide review marking 30 years since Texas authorized charter schools. Maintained source and matching records, independently checked fiscal totals, and flagged incorrect units and a missing estimate qualifier before publication.
- Built a Python framework to estimate school districts' revenue loss associated with student transfers to public charter schools, using a method developed with school finance experts. Produced maps, spreadsheets, and reports for coalition hearings, town halls, and briefings; distinguished observed transfers from estimates where counts were suppressed.
- Created teadata, a Python data engine and query language for reproducible Texas education research across sources and years. Use it to develop dataforpubliceducation.com, a platform in active development for ready-made analyses, visualizations, and workspaces for custom research on local education agencies and campuses across datasets.

Government Relations Specialist & Policy Analyst

Texas AFT | Austin, Texas *Nov. 2021–Jan. 2025*

- Served as a registered lobbyist and lead Texas House legislative agent. Worked across party lines and with policy, communications, and organizing colleagues to turn analysis and research into testimony, amendments, briefs, newsletters, and lawmaker follow-up; mentored junior colleagues.
- Drafted legislative proposals and worked with House offices on bill filing and hearing preparation; recruited and prepared witnesses. Worked with Rep. Donna Howard's office and others on an adopted author amendment to House Bill 100 (88-R) that restored language reserving 25% of compensation funding from a basic allotment increase for support staff.
- Researched education policy issues including school finance, educator certification and retention, accountability, and state intervention. Developed and modeled an alternative $1.403 billion educator workforce proposal for Senate Bill 9 (88-R), using statewide Texas Education Directory (AskTED) and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data to estimate district-level effects during session.

- Researched and wrote *The Lost Decade (and a Half)* in 2024, analyzing inflation-adjusted educator pay and recruitment and retention. Separately built the 1,019-district salary analysis and interactive map for the original 2022 *Lost Decade* white paper, helping the Houston Federation of Teachers make its case in pay negotiations that resulted in an 11% average raise for teachers and staff on the teacher pay scale.
- Collaborated with Every Texan in the 2023 regular session (88-R) to model estimated fiscal effects of voucher proposals on school districts and legislative districts under explicit participation scenarios. Produced spreadsheets and custom handouts for all 150 House and 31 Senate districts; worked with communications colleagues on ready-made communications and social media posts.
- Worked on retired educators' cost-of-living adjustments, arranging testimony and providing briefings. Took responsibility for American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and retiree work ahead of the 2025 session, including interim testimony, trainings, and legislative priorities.
- Prepared a Generation 27 charter impact brief for State Board of Education review.

Legislative Director 2020–2021 | Communications Director 2017–2020

Office of State Representative Eddie Rodriguez *Jan. 2017–Nov. 2021*
Austin, Texas

- Directed the legislative portfolio; staffed State Affairs, Ways & Means, and Corrections; drafted bills, amendments, budget riders, points of order, voting recommendations, and member briefings. Assigned and reviewed aides' work; trained them in Legislative Council research and casework tools, constituent service, and agency coordination. Handled casework and correspondence and organized town halls. Prepared speeches and talking points; managed the newsletter, website, and social media.
- Prepared research, amendment materials, and talking points for a House-adopted 2021 budget amendment requiring timely distribution of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II and III funds to schools and prohibiting their use to supplant state education funding.
- Principal drafter of House Bill 2108 (86-R); led stakeholder and legislative work through enactment of its substantive framework in Senate Bill 572 (86-R), expanding Texas cottage food law.
- Worked with Mobile Loaves & Fishes to draft and pass House Bill 115 (87-R), removing a property tax exemption barrier to Community First! Village's planned permanent supportive housing expansion.
- Helped structure City of Austin and Austin Police Retirement System negotiations that produced House Bill 4368 (87-R) to restore a path to solvency. Tracked contested issues, prepared the member, and translated agreements into policy language.
- Developed policy across public education, taxation, housing, broadband, utilities, pensions, appropriations, and local control; coordinated the Travis County delegation's 2021 redistricting work.

Legislative Aide & Digital/Communications Director

Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer / Mexican American Legislative Caucus *Apr. 2015–Jan. 2017*

- Advanced from legislative aide to legislative and caucus communications roles; supported bill research, constituent services, committee and floor preparation, and stakeholder outreach. Managed websites and weekly newsletters and wrote speeches, talking points, and press materials.

EDUCATION, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND TOOLS

Rice University | B.A. in Political Science; Minor in Business | Presidential Scholar | May 2013
PCAP Certified Associate in Python Programming, 2019
Former Travis County Democratic Precinct 431 chair; delegate, 2024 Democratic National Convention.

Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook) and Google Workspace (Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Gmail); automated Word, PDF, and Excel reporting; Python and SQL; data visualization and geospatial analysis; web development (Django, JavaScript, HTML/CSS); survey data analysis; public records research and information requests; Google Apps Script and Microsoft Power Automate.