

Teachers union advances agenda to keep waiting students from attending a charter school

AUSTIN – Today Texas Charter Schools Association CEO Starlee Coleman issued the following response to the Texas Federation of Teachers’ misguided and factually inaccurate call for a charter school moratorium:

“We strongly oppose a ban on new public charter schools. At last count, there were more than 141,000 student names on public charter school waiting lists statewide. Rather than slow down on building new public charter schools, we should speed up.”

In addition to TFT’s anti-student policy agenda that would keep Texas students on waiting lists, their arguments include numerous inaccuracies, which are addressed individually below.

“TCSA welcomes a debate about the right direction for public education in Texas, but let’s have it based on facts,” said Coleman.

On Funding

What TFT forgets to share about funding is that while charters schools are public schools and subject to the same outcomes requirements as district schools, they do not have access to any local property tax money. Their only funding comes from the state and they get an average of \$1,700 less per student when you add the state and local funding that district schools receive. It’s disingenuous and dishonest to only talk about state funding and ignore the significant local dollars that fund ISDs.

Statewide, charter schools are serving 6 percent of the public school students. If ISDs serve 94 percent of the kids and get funding for those students from the state AND local property taxes and they can’t make the math work, that says something about their ability to be accountable to taxpayers.

More on charter school funding can be found [here](#).

On Academic Performance

When it comes to charter school performance, we recognize that not all charter schools are high performing. But poorly performing charter schools don’t linger in Texas. Texas has the strongest charter school law in the country for accountability and schools that do not meet academic standards are closed within three years.

For charter schools that are doing well, the data is indisputable. Over 20 percent of Texas’ A-rated school districts are charter school districts, despite educating only 6 percent of students. Charter schools send more English Learners to college, and twice as many of them get advanced or dual-course credit in high school. More students from economically disadvantaged

backgrounds at charter schools are enrolling in college (65 percent vs. 47 percent of ISD students). Hispanic students attending Texas charter schools outscored all statewide averages in 8th grade math for Hispanic students in all states across the country on the most recent Nation's Report Card.

On Discipline Issues

District schools remove students with disciplinary issues from the classroom every day. The difference is that ISDs have the funding and legal authority to put those students in an alternative setting that is better for them. Some charter schools have worked to find resources within their budgets to create innovative solutions to accommodate students whose disciplinary challenges make them unable to be in a traditional classroom with their peers, and we are proud of their efforts. But many charter schools do not have the resources to create these special programs; and no charters have the legal authority to pool resources for facilities that would allow them to collaborate with one another to serve these students.

On Charter Notification

Perhaps TFT hasn't seen the state law that spells out the charter approval or expansion notification policy. Districts are notified four times before a new charter application is approved in their boundaries; and have the opportunity to weigh in directly with the state on the financial impact the approval would have on the district before the application is approved.

Here is the process charter schools and the state must follow for approving new schools and notifying districts.

On Accountability

TFT would have everyone believe it is the wild west when it comes to the regulation of charter schools. Charter schools are required to follow the same open records law, the same conflict of interest laws, and the same generally accepted accounting principles as ISD schools. Furthermore, the Charter First accountability system run by TEA rates finances for charter schools. If a school receive three strikes, they are shut down, regardless of academic performance.

For more information about charter schools in Texas, [click here](#).

About the Texas Charter Schools Association

The Texas Charter Schools Association (TCSA) was created in 2008 to unify, support, and grow the charter movement. TCSA represents 90 percent of the 675 public charter schools in Texas, serving more than 272,000 students. For more about the TCSA, visit txcharterschools.org.

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