

2021 Legislative Session Priorities for Public Charter Schools

Educators, parents, and leaders from Texas public charter schools ask lawmakers to support the following policy priorities so that more students can reach their full potential:



Treat Public Charter Schools Fairly

Problem: Unlike traditional district schools, public charter schools must pay property taxes for buildings they lease. It is estimated that public charter schools paid \$12 million worth of those taxes last year – funds intended for the classroom.



Solution: Exempt charters from property taxes on leased facilities so they can use those funds for teacher salaries, instructional materials, technology, and other classroom needs.

Problem: Charters are not eligible to apply for state grant funding that supports career and technical training at public schools. The funding totals \$8 million annually and is offered through the Texas Workforce Commission.



Solution: Allow public charter schools, like other public schools, to apply for the Jobs & Education for Texans (JET) grant program so they can better prepare students for great careers.

Problem: Local governments routinely discriminate against public charter schools that want to open new campuses – for example, by forcing them to buy more land than they need and by denying them permits to use space in existing buildings. This prevents students from attending the public schools that best meet their individual needs.



Solution: Ensure equal treatment of all public schools in permitting and zoning decisions by preventing cities and counties from discriminating against public charter schools.

Problem: Dropout recovery schools – which help students who have dropped out of high school get back on track – are sometimes evaluated by the state in a way that doesn't reflect the unique needs of these young adults.



Solution: Revise state rules so that schools are appropriately classified as dropout recovery schools and evaluated according to standards that accurately reflect their students' progress.



Allow Public Charter Schools to Meet Parent Demand

Problem: Opponents of charter schools want the SBOE, TEA, and Legislature to create arbitrary rules about where charters can open their doors to students.



Solution: Protect the ability of public charter schools to open campuses in response to family need and demand, in accordance with the current system of strong state oversight.

Problem: Charter schools can only enroll students from specific geographic areas, which blocks students from outside those borders from attending the school that would best meet their needs. Meanwhile, open enrollment ISDs are allowed to accept students regardless of where they live.



Solution: Help all students, regardless of where they live, access the public education that's right for them by removing unnecessary geographic boundaries and creating parity between public charter schools and open enrollment ISDs.

Problem: Every charter school in Texas has an assigned enrollment cap. These caps even apply to students who are attending school only online and are never physically on campus for instruction. This blocks students who want to learn online full time from enrolling in the school that would best meet their needs if the school's physical campus is full.



Solution: Change the law so that students who are attending school online full time do not count toward a charter school's in-person student enrollment cap.