

2021 Policy Priorities for Texas Public Charter Schools

ENSURE ALL TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE TREATED FAIRLY

Addressing City Discrimination

(HB 1348 & SB 487)

Local governments are unfairly discriminating against public charter schools, requiring them to follow different rules than ISDs. This legislation will ensure public charter schools are treated the same as ISDs with respect to zoning, permitting, and fees so that ALL public schools can focus their limited funds on serving students, instead of red tape.

Addressing City Discrimination and Arbitrary Vetoes by the SBOE

(SB 28)

Some State Board of Education members are exploring a moratorium on all new public charter schools, despite long waiting lists and an already-rigorous approval process. In addition to addressing city discrimination issues as mentioned above, this bill will require the SBOE to specify a reason if board members veto a public charter school application that has been vetted and recommended by the commissioner of education. This will prevent arbitrary vetoes of high-quality public charter schools that want to serve students who need them.

Creating Property Tax Parity for All Schools

(HB 3610)

Public charter schools must use state-allocated funds--an estimated 12 million dollars in total--to pay local property taxes on leased school buildings. This legislation will exempt all public schools (both charter schools and ISDs) from paying property taxes on buildings they lease, so that those funds can instead address critical classroom needs.

Creating More Career and Technical Education Opportunities

(SB 346 & HB 618)

Public charter schools are not eligible for the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant program, which provides funding for public schools to purchase equipment for use in career and technical education classes--leaving them at a funding disadvantage. This legislation ensures that all Texas public schools are eligible for these grants.

Changing Dropout Recovery Designation

(SB 879 & HB 998)

In order to be designated as a dropout recovery school, schools must serve students in grades 9-12 and at least 50% of their students must be 17 years old by Sept. 1 of the school year. But data shows us that 45% of high school dropouts are 16 or younger when they leave school. Following the recommendations of a TEA taskforce, this legislation would change the dropout recovery designation for ISDs and public charter schools so that it's based on how many high school students are aged 16 or older for ISD and public charter schools. This will ensure dropout recovery schools are evaluated by the state's "A-F" accountability system in a way that accurately reflects the needs and progress of their students.

HELP MORE STUDENTS SUCCEED

Reviewing the STAAR Exam to Prevent Cultural Bias

(SB 577)

Assessments like the SAT and IQ tests have undergone review and revision in recent years to correct for an underlying bias in favor of Anglo-centric cultures. This bill will similarly authorize a review of the Texas STAAR exam program to ensure all students, regardless of cultural background, have an equal chance at success.

Authorizing Weighted Lotteries for Disadvantaged Students

(HB 2391)

Public charter schools must hold random admissions lotteries when the number of students who apply exceeds the number of available seats, instead of considering an applicant's needs. This legislation would allow public charter schools (as well as ISD schools) to serve more educationally disadvantaged students--especially English learners and special education students--by using "weighted" lotteries that set aside seats for them.

KEEP ALL TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

Reporting Police Interactions at Public Schools

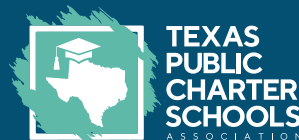
(HB 1194)

Historically students of color have been disciplined by school officials at higher rates than white students, even for the same student code of conduct violations. This bill requires all public schools--ISD and charter--to file detailed reports with TEA on law enforcement interactions with students.

Protecting Taxpayer Funds

(HB 189 and HB 1320)

When the state legislature recently passed two measures to ensure taxpayer dollars were spent wisely, public charter schools were erroneously left out. These bills clear up that error, and ensure that public charter schools are held to the same high standards of fiscal responsibility as all public schools when it comes to severance packages for Superintendents and CEOs and use of taxpayer funds for air travel.



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