

CHARTER SCHOOLS VS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Texas has strong laws to safeguard taxpayer dollars and protect parent and student rights. However, many of these laws do not apply to open-enrollment charter schools. Recent examples underscore the need for charter schools to comply with safeguards on ethics and transparency. As charters continue to grow — now accounting for seven percent of public school students and 18.5 percent of state funding for public schools — it is important to ensure they are transparent and accountable to taxpayers. Just as public school districts are, charter schools should be required to follow state laws on parental rights and student protections, such as those governing data privacy.

Charters divert millions of taxpayer dollars from Texas public school classrooms to private charter-affiliated groups and people, sometimes located in other states, without sufficient oversight or accountability. Charter schools are projected to receive \$8.8 billion in public funds over the 2022-23 budget period, and they now enroll 20 percent or more of students in our largest urban areas. Charter schools should be held to the same standards as public school districts.

Charters' policies, practices and budgets often do not provide equal choices for all students. This limits educational opportunities, especially for students needing special education services.

- Charters can exclude students who have any disciplinary history, even for minor infractions, and this has a disproportionate impact on special education students.
- In fact, charter schools serve 32 percent fewer special education students statewide than public school districts.
- Charters also can exclude students by not providing transportation, which limits charter access to families who have reliable vehicles and flexible schedules. Some charters continue this practice even though they can receive state funds for transportation.
- Charters' privately selected governing boards — versus public schools' elected boards — have no public oversight and are often located in faraway cities. This gives families limited recourse for advocating for their students.

State lawmakers should prohibit charter schools from denying enrollment to any student residing in their attendance zone and should require charters to provide the full array of services needed by local students.