



**Written Testimony of the Texas Latino Education Coalition relating to  
Deregulation of Public Schools and Successive Harm to Students,  
in Opposition to HB 2955, Submitted to the Texas House Public Education Committee,  
April 27, 2017**

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for hearing our testimony today. The Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals who advocate the rights of Latinos at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus specifically on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools.

The best way to support public schools is by supporting public schools – not by ushering public schools into a private market of competition. HB 2955 encourages public schools to request waivers of state requirements in order to *allegedly* compete more effectively with charter and private schools. This bill is especially concerning because it assumes that the track record of charter schools operating, in part, under separate regulations is somehow producing superior results to traditional public schools. After more than 20 years of the Texas charter school “experiment,” the evidence shows otherwise. For example:

1. A 2016 study stated, “Well over 80 independent and generally accepted studies...yielded the consistent finding that, after controlling for student demographics, charter schools show test-score results at levels that are not meaningfully better or worse than district schools” (Mathis, 2016).
2. According to recent reports by the Texas Education Agency:
  - One out of every 12 charter operators (8.2 percent) failed to achieve the “met standard” or the lower “alternative standard,” compared to fewer than one out of every 25 school districts (3.8 percent).
  - The true numbers may be even worse, as 10 charters (5.1 percent) were not rated compared to only two school districts (0.2 percent).
  - The 2016 TEA state accountability ratings showed a continuing trend, with approximately twice as many charter campuses receiving “Improvement Required” ratings (10 percent) compared to traditional public schools (5.1 percent).

Clearly, state requirements that are so-called “impediments” are not hindering public education. Market-based reforms, such as transferring control of schools to private operators, do not offer a catch-all

solution. Largely, public schools continue to outperform privately-operated charter schools with the regulations in place. These include teacher certification requirements, class size requirements, bilingual education requirements, among others. **Allowing school boards to opt out of these essential regulations in the name of “competition” will take our schools and our children down a race to the bottom.**

While charter schools have siphoned off thousands of students and \$2 billion and counting from public schools, likely through sleeker public marketing campaigns and state “reforms” that have undermined public schools, the solution is not to allow public schools to “act more like charter schools.”

The solution begins with the state establishing a moratorium on charter schools and improving public schools by investing in public schools with sufficient and equitable resources supported by a fair, meaningful and transparent accountability system.

In light of charter schools’ mixed performance and substantial state funding diverted away from public schools and to privately operated charter schools already, further expansion of “charter-esque” measures, such as waivers from critical regulation for competitive purposes, would not be a wise move. Worse, it would harm the learning of hundreds of thousands of students across the state, especially underserved students of color and low-income students who stand to be enrolled in those districts qualifying for waivers under the bill.

TLEC thanks this committee for the opportunity to testify and urges the committee to oppose HB 2955.

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#### Resources

- IDRA. (December 2015). “The State of Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools and a Modest Proposal to Diversify and Improve Public Charter Schools, Charter School Interim Charge before the Texas Senate Education Committee (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association). <http://www.idra.org/resource-center/the-state-of-texas-open-enrollment/>
- Mathis, W., (August 2016) “Research Based Options for Education Policymaking: Regulating Charter Schools,” Policy Brief (Boulder, Colo.: National Education Policy Center). <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/research-based-options>
- Texas Education Agency. (November 17, 2016). Highlights of the 2016 State Accountability Results (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency). <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2016/highlights.pdf>