

Charter debate; slippery bag slope; bag ban not enough

Comments from our readers

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Charter debate

It's inspiring that East Austin residents are so passionate about public education. Although we understand the anxiety local parents feel about the new proposal to collaborate with one of our charter members, IDEA Public Schools, within the Austin Independent School District, we see the partnership as significant progress for education opportunity in East Austin.

Public charter schools in Texas educate over 133,000 students, with 56,000 on waitlists to attend. This summer the Texas Center for Education Research found that parents were not only satisfied, but also more involved in their child's charter school education. Charter parents preferred the educational programs, instruction, enrichment programs and approaches to discipline. Nationally, parents in communities with charter schools favor them by a margin of 57 percent to 16 percent (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 3, 2010).

IDEA Public Schools deserves a chance in Austin because our students deserve quality public educations, nothing less and not later.

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There are many very good reasons not to support charter schools. First, charter schools, on average, do no better than public schools on standardized tests. In fact, many charter schools perform worse than public schools. Second, charter schools are allowed to pick the students who will attend, and often send students with behavioral issues, special needs and low academic performance back to public schools. Third, teachers for charter schools are hired "at will," and can be fired without any due process. Finally the East Austin community has expressed that they do not want their schools taken over by IDEA. This should be the foremost concern of the school board. The rally that took place outside the school board meeting on Dec. 12 should be evidence enough to encourage the members to do the right thing and keep our community schools public.

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Slippery bag slope

Re: Dec. 12 article, "City may ban most plastic, paper bags."

Gee, am I the only one in the Great Progressive State of Austin who sees the danger in the latest mandate from our wonderful and "well-meaning" city officials who want to ban "most plastic, paper bags"?