



March 27, 2019

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker Dennis Bonnen
Texas Capitol
1100 Congress Ave.
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Lt. Governor Patrick, Speaker Bonnen, Chairman Huberty, Chairman Taylor, and members of the Texas House and Senate:

We are a group of public charter school leaders writing to share four priorities for school finance reform as you work toward the final version of House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 4. On behalf of our students and educators, we thank you for your leadership on this critical issue to date. Like you, we believe the state has an extraordinary opportunity this session to invest in the future of every student, so that all Texas children, regardless of race, income, or neighborhood, have the chance to succeed academically and lead choice-filled lives.

To achieve this goal for all students, including the nearly 300,000 students attending public charter schools, we urge you to support the following four priorities:

- 1) Support a level playing field.** Keep it fair by ensuring that changes to the school finance formula provide proportionate benefit for public charter students and traditional public-school students. We should see a comparable average increase to per-pupil funding for all types of public schools, at both the base level and for students who share the same level of need.
- 2) Maintain flexibility and creativity.** Continue public charter school educators' ability to cut through red tape and innovate to put the needs of students first. Public charter schools were designed to allow educators the room to be creative in exchange for greater accountability, a bargain that has allowed public charters to succeed and meet the needs of our individual students.¹
- 3) Don't reverse progress on charter school facilities funding.** Unlike traditional public schools, public charter schools cannot levy taxes and receive no local taxpayer money for our facilities. To address this, in 2017 the Legislature created, for the first time, a \$60 million fund for public charter school facilities, to be distributed on a per-student basis to charters with good academic performance under Texas Education Agency (TEA) accountability ratings. Unfortunately, this progress toward leveling the playing field could be significantly eroded by a provision in HB3 that requires public charters to pay into the Teacher Retirement System at a significantly higher rate than in

¹ How Do Texas Charter Schools Help Students Succeed? <https://www.txcharterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Charter-School-Success.pdf>



past years, without providing dollars to cover this new estimated \$25 million cost to public charter schools. This year, public charters can better afford our school facilities without cutting into funds that should go into the classroom. Now that we are finally making progress, we urge the legislature not to take that away by adding new costs to public charter schools.

4) Advance equity for all. Although we do not yet know the full financial impact of funding reform on either Independent School Districts or public charter districts, we applaud the House Public Education Committee, Senate Education Committee, the School Finance Reform Commission, and our state elected leaders for the shared commitment to increasing funding for our most vulnerable students: students living in poverty, students learning English, and students with special needs. We urge you to ensure that the final bill provides for an adequate increase in funding for all public schools, regardless of type, who serve a significant concentration of our highest-need students. In particular, we urge legislators to examine financial models produced by the Legislative Budget Board to ensure that no high-poverty school experiences a cut in funding due to formula changes.

As public charter leaders, we are proud to play an important role in creating one strong public education system: we help more parents access the right-fit schools that meet their children’s individual needs, we give educators the freedom to innovate and identify new best practices, and we collaborate with traditional public schools through transformative partnerships that benefit all students. We thank all members of the Legislature for your shared commitment to investing in public education this session. We urge you to support the above principles, and we stand ready to work with you to advance equity and excellence so that all Texas students have the opportunity to succeed. If you have any questions, please contact Starlee Coleman, CEO, Texas Charter Schools Association, at scoleman@txcharterschools.org.

Sincerely,

The Texas Charter Schools Association:

A W BROWN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	Dallas
A+ ACADEMY	Dallas
A+ UNLIMITED POTENTIAL	Houston
ACADEMY OF ACCELERATED LEARNING	Houston
ADVANTAGE ACADEMY	Duncanville
ALIEF MONTESSORI COMMUNITY SCHOOL	Houston
AMBASSADORS PREPARATORY ACADEMY	Galveston
AMIGOS POR VIDA	Houston
ARISTOI CLASSICAL ACADEMY	Katy
ARLINGTON CLASSICS ACADEMY	Arlington



ARROW ACADEMY	College Station
AUSTIN ACHIEVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Austin
AUSTIN DISCOVERY SCHOOL	Austin
BASIS TEXAS	San Antonio
BEATRICE MAYES INSTITUTE	Houston
BETA ACADEMY	Houston
BOB HOPE SCHOOL	Port Arthur
BROOKS ACADEMY OF SCIENCE & ENGINEERING	San Antonio
CALVIN NELMS CHARTER SCHOOLS	Katy
CEDARS INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY	Austin
CHAPARRAL STAR ACADEMY	Austin
CHAPEL HILL ACADEMY	Fort Worth
CITYSCAPE SCHOOLS	Dallas
COMPASS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	Odessa
COMPASS ROSE ACADEMY	San Antonio
CORPUS CHRISTI MONTESSORI SCHOOL	Corpus Christi
CROSTIMBERS ACADEMY	Nemo
CUMBERLAND ACADEMY	Tyler
DR M L GARZA-GONZALEZ CHARTER	Corpus Christi
EAST TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS	Longview
EDUCATION CENTER INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY	Mesquite
EHRHART SCHOOL	Beaumont
EL PASO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	El Paso
ERATH EXCELS ACADEMY INC	Stephenville
EVOLUTION ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	Richardson
EXCEL ACADEMY	Houston
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	Mission
FORT WORTH ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS	Fort Worth
GATEWAY ACADEMY CHARTER DISTRICT	San Antonio
GEORGE GERVIN ACADEMY	San Antonio
GEORGE I SANCHEZ CHARTER	Houston
GOODWATER MONTESSORI SCHOOL	Georgetown
GREAT HEARTS TEXAS	San Antonio
HARMONY PUBLIC SCHOOL	Houston, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, San Antonio
HENRY FORD ACADEMY ALAMEDA SCHOOL	San Antonio
HERITAGE ACADEMY	Schertz
HIGH POINT ACADEMY	Fort Worth



HORIZON MONTESSORI PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Weslaco
HOUSTON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL	Houston
IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, Austin, El Paso
IMAGINE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY	McKinney
INSPIRE ACADEMIES	San Antonio
INSPIRED VISION ACADEMY	Dallas
INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF TEXAS	Richardson
JEAN MASSIEU ACADEMY	Arlington
JUBILEE ACADEMIES	San Antonio
KATHERINE ANNE PORTER SCHOOL	Wimberley
KI CHARTER ACADEMY	San Marcos
KIPP	Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio
LA ACADEMIA DE ESTRELLAS	Dallas
LA FE PREPARATORY SCHOOL	El Paso
LEADERSHIP PREP SCHOOL	Frisco
LEGACY PREPATORY CHARTER ACADEMY	Dallas
LIFE SCHOOL	Red Oak
LUMIN EDUCATION	Dallas
MANARA ACADEMY	Irving
MEADOWLAND CHARTER DISTRICT	Boerne
MERIDIAN WORLD SCHOOL	Round Rock
MEYERPARK ELEMENTARY	Houston
MIDLAND ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	Midland
MIDVALLEY ACADEMY CHARTER DISTRICT	San Antonio
MONTESSORI FOR ALL	Austin
NEW FRONTIERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	San Antonio
NORTH TEXAS COLLEGIATE ACADEMY	Denton
NYOS CHARTER SCHOOL	Austin
ODYSSEY ACADEMY INC	Galveston
ORENDA CHARTER SCHOOL	Georgetown
PANOLA CHARTER SCHOOL	Carthage
PASO DEL NORTE ACADEMY CHARTER	San Antonio
PEGASUS SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES	Dallas
PINEYWOODS COMMUNITY ACADEMY	Lufkin
PIONEER TECHNOLOGY & ARTS ACADEMY	Mesquite
PREMIER HIGH SCHOOLS	Statewide



PRIORITY CHARTER SCHOOLS	Morgan's Point Resort
PROMISE COMMUNITY SCHOOL	Bellaire
RANCH ACADEMY	Canton
RAPOPORT ACADEMY PUBLIC SCHOOL	Waco
RAUL YZAGUIRRE SCHOOL FOR SUCCESS	Houston
RAVEN SCHOOL	New Waverly
RICHARD MILBURN ALTER HIGH SCHOOL	McQueeney
RICHLAND COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL	Dallas
RISE ACADEMY	Lubbock
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY CHARTER SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION	Huntsville
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	San Antonio
SEASHORE CHARTER SCHOOLS	San Antonio & Houston
SER-NINOS CHARTER SCHOOL	Corpus Christi
SOUTH PLAINS ACADEMY CHARTER	Houston
SOUTHWEST SCHOOL	San Antonio
ST ANTHONY SCHOOL	Houston
ST MARY'S ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	Dallas
STEP CHARTER SCHOOL	Beeville
TEKOA ACADEMY OF ACCELERATED STUDIES	Houston
TEXANS CAN ACADEMIES	Port Arthur
TEXAS COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMIES	Dallas
TEXAS EMPOWERMENT ACADEMY	Lewisville
TEXAS LEADERSHIP	Austin
TEXAS PREPARATORY SCHOOL	San Angelo
TEXAS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS	San Marcos
THE EXCEL CENTER	Fort Worth
THE EXCEL CENTER (FOR ADULTS)	Austin
THE PRO-VISION ACADEMY	Austin
THE RHODES SCHOOL	Houston
THE VARNETT PUBLIC SCHOOL	Houston
TREETOPS SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL	Houston
TRINITY CHARTER SCHOOL	Eules
TRIVIUM ACADEMY	Austin
TWO DIMENSIONS PREPARATORY ACADEMY	Carrollton
UME PREPARATORY ACADEMY	Houston
VANGUARD ACADEMY	Dallas
	Pharr



VILLAGE TECH SCHOOLS
WACO CHARTER SCHOOL
WAXAHACHIE FAITH FAMILY ACADEMY
WAYSIDE SCHOOLS
WESTLAKE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
WINFREE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS
YES PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS INC

Duncanville
Waco
Desoto
Austin
Westlake
Irving
Houston