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To: Senate Education Committee

Chair: Florence Shapiro
Vice – Chair: Dan Patrick
Members: John Carona
Wendy Davis
Mario Gallegos
Steve Ogden
Kel Seliger
Leticia van De Putte
Royce West

From: David W. Dick

Re: Taxpayer Savings Grants
Date: August, 21, 2012

My hope was to testify in person. However, I am privileged to be “delivering” my daughter to college on the same day as your Education Committee Hearing. That being said, please accept my comments as follows:

I am an El Paso, Texas resident and independent business owner. El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) is in the middle of a corruption scandal that is proving to be widespread (i.e. see AFP Texas / Red Apple Project). Even so, families and their students are “stuck” in their school districts and have no choice. The only people with a choice in the matter (i.e. to remove themselves from the failing, corrupt EPISD) are people with financial means. Everyone else is stuck and that is very unfortunate.

Before this broke out, I had one Trustee tell me EPISD was “exemplary” and choice would only take resources away from the district at a time when they are performing at superior levels. That being said, if you assume not one child in EPISD exercises their “choice” then not one thing would change for EPISD. And since they are “exemplary” why be concerned with making choice available and why hold the rest of Texas hostage? In other words, if they are so good why be concerned that a family might choose a different option?

Now we know their exemplary ratings were the result of manipulations and system wide cheating. Yet kids are stuck! The families have no options. In the private sector the board of trustees and administrators would be fired and maybe even in jail.

El Paso is adversely affected by the EPISD failures when recruiting industry to our community. El Paso is full of economic opportunity and potential for employers all across the United States and the public school system is letting us down. School Choice in Texas would tell the rest of the country Texas cares about education. Texas should be leading this charge to protect our vibrant economy. To do otherwise threatens to slowly and surely deteriorate our economy.

My 22 year old daughter is going to be a teacher when she graduates this May. There is no market for her in El Paso, and I suspect Texas to get a job teaching. School Choice would create a market place of private and public options for every teacher in Texas. In a choice state she could even start her own school and compete.

My three daughters attended both private and public schools. We had good and bad experiences at both. The difference is that when we had a bad product from a private school, we left. We had a choice. When our Texas children are getting a bad product from their public school, they are stuck. This system is hurting the economically disadvantaged the most. That's not right!

I have never seen a public school teacher or administrator fired. They just get reassigned. Private school teachers sign a contract and if they don't perform their contract won't be extended or renewed. Texas public schools will benefit the most from choice which breeds competition and encourages efficiency and excellence. Texas is the winner in this scenario and Texas should be a leader in education, not a laggard follower.

Continuing to pour tax payer resources into the same system and expect different results is insanity?

Parents know best. Choice is demanded in other parts of society, it should be a priority for parents to choose their kids education provider.

For numerous reasons school choice, and in particular Taxpayer Savings Grants, is the right thing for Texas. I urge you to support choice initiatives and help Texas and my community of El Paso, prosper and move forward in this critical area of education. Texas should be leading this charge!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David W. Dick". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

David W. Dick