

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

AUGUST 24, 2012

TESIMONY OF TOM ARCHER

PRESIDENT – OUR VALUES OUR TEXAS

The underlying policy question behind Interim Charges 5 and 6 amounts to this:

Should the State of Texas take additional funding away from our underfunded public schools and provide it to charter schools and private schools to implement a policy of “school choice?”

The answer is clearly “no.” Our Values Our Texas, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing Texas values such as public education, respectfully provides the answer based on the following facts:

1. The success of Texas public schools is directly linked to state funding. Since the adoption of Article VII of the Texas Constitution in 1876, public education in Texas has succeeded when it receives sufficient funding. Draining additional funds from public schools will only add to the significant harm caused by inadequate state funding over the past 6 fiscal years. The \$5.3B cut from public education in 2011 needs to be restored, and additional funding should be appropriated.
2. Almost 60% of Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged. These kids need additional help to achieve educational success and thus cost more to educate.
3. Charter schools are not more efficient than public schools. Their lower cost differential results from paying teachers significantly less and not being required to provide certain services such as transportation, guidance counseling, and athletics provided by the public schools.
4. The Texas system of school finance has no rational basis and needs a major overhaul. Adopting an equitable system of school finance and providing sufficient funding for all of our public schools is a solution that will work, contrary to “school choice,” which will provide an inferior educational product that harms, not enhances, public education.