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Senator Rodríguez's statement on SB 4, which gives public money to private schools

AUSTIN – SB 4, the school voucher bill that would divert money from public to private schools, passed the Senate floor today. State Sen. José Rodríguez voted against the bill, after his amendment to require that private schools receiving public funds are held to the same standards as public schools was not accepted. His statement is as follows:

There is no clear evidence showing that voucher students perform better than do public school students. In fact, evidence suggests precisely the opposite. For example, in Louisiana, fewer than half – 44 percent – of voucher students who took the statewide tests passed those exams in 2014. In comparison, 69 percent of public school students statewide passed the exams.

Voucher schools are not held to the same standards as public schools, and without state accountability standards fly-by-night private schools could start popping up simply to get access to public dollars. Without clear accountability that tracks public school standards, parents might not know the school isn't meeting their expectations. My amendment would have allowed vouchers with transparency, but unfortunately it was not accepted, and for that reason I voted against SB 4.

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Hispanic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.

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