

**Prepared Testimony of
Arturo B. Suarez, Director/Superintendent of
Positive Solutions Charter School
Before the Senate Education Committee regarding SB 1830
Tuesday, March 31, 2009**

Good morning Madam Chair, Vice-Chair Patrick, and distinguish Committee Members. I am Arturo B. Suarez the Director/Superintendent of Positive Solutions Charter School in San Antonio, Texas and a current Board Member on the Texas Charter School Association (TCSA).

Thank you Senator Patrick, for authoring the bill that has brought us together here today and Madam Chair thank you – for you visit here in Austin to CAN Academy and the positive impact it has had upon the charter community in Texas, especially to those of us in the drop-out/recovery realm.

Our school was founded in 1998 and serves any 9th through 12th grade students that reside in Bexar County (that include 12 different school districts) who have not found a positive educational experienced in our traditional public schools.

Many of our students are two or three and even four grades behind. Yet, this is our choice and our challenge to recover and provide a positive educational experience to all students. Examples of the student population drop-out recovery schools service; forth year students having only 5 credits, parenting students, a larger percentage of at-risk population compare to traditional districts and a larger percentage of special needs students. But yet, we still need to continue to build on each student success as an example of one of our special-needs student at 18 year old having two children and was still able to complete her graduation requirements and has continued her education now attending our local community college.

Currently, the TEA Commissioner's rules do not correctly address the computation of students who drop-out of School. The current rules count a student as drop-out even if they only spent one (1) week, or even one (1) day, on a particular campus. Current rules also allow a student to be counted as a drop-out at multiple schools. As you know charter schools are schools of choice, and as

Parents and Students make the choice to enroll at any charter school they have the choice to leave and return back to their home campus or another charter school. If a student drop-out of Chris's school, which counted as a drop-out for YES Prep— and then if the same student, enroll and drop-out of my school, they also get counted as a drop-out at Positive Solutions Charter School.

Senate Bill 1830 helps drop-out recovery charter schools in the following ways:

1. Will help better define a drop-out student for charter school and for traditional school districts to avoid multiple counting of the same student dropping out of school in two or even more different campuses.
2. Under this bill, student must be enrolled in school for at least 85 days before they can be counted in completion or drop-out calculations. This will give the state a much clearer picture of how well drop-out recovery schools and traditional school district are performing.
3. The 85 day rule will avoid drop-out recovery charter school from being penalize in servicing our state's most challenging students (at-risk population).

Our drop-outs issues are not only a Texas-specific problem; it is challenge to our entire nation. We agree with President Barack Obama when he said, "Dropping out of school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country – and this country needs and values the talents of every American."

I thank you listening; and at this time I'll like to introduce our next speaker Dr. Cheryl Washington, CEO and Superintendent of Shekinah Learning Institute, to discuss lifting the cap on charter school and streamlining the replication process.

Again, I thank you for your time.