

**Prepared Testimony of
David Dunn, Executive Director of the Texas Charter Schools Association
Before the Senate Education Committee regarding SB 1830
Tuesday, March 31, 2009**

Good Morning Madam Chair, Vice-Chair Patrick, and Committee Members. I'm David Dunn, the Executive Director of the Texas Charter Schools Association. I want to thank you, Senator Patrick, for authoring Senate Bill 1830 -- and you, **Madam Chair, for your continued support to charter schools and for taking time last week to visit a local drop-out prevention charter school.**

I'm proud to represent the TCSA, **the leading membership organization** of effective charter schools of all types. We proudly **represent over 50,000 students in 272 campuses** across Texas --- which equals **well over half** of the students currently enrolled in Texas' open enrollment charter schools.

Today, the charter movement in Texas is very different from in years past. **The full range of charter schools from college prep to drop-out prevention schools** have come together to speak with one voice during the 81st legislative session. I'm optimistic that we're on a path toward **strengthening the quality and capacity** of all charters, which in turn strengthens the **overall public education system** so that ALL Texas students have the opportunity to excel. With the generous support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation, we look forward to our continued cooperation with the legislature and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to help public schools thrive.

Senate Bill 1830 is critically important to ensuring options for public school students and families. Public charters offer innovative learning practices and modern teaching methods that can potentially be replicated in the broader public school system. Across the state, and across the entire country, the statistics reflect demand for charter schools is increasing -- while over **90,000 kids are currently educated in Texas charter schools, more than 16,000 are still on waiting lists.** The rapidly growing number of students on waiting lists demonstrates the need for lifting the cap on charter schools in Texas.

Beyond quantity, we are raising the quality of charter schools at the TCSA and through this legislation. Senate Bill 1830 seeks to modernize Chapter 12 of the Education Code by addressing the inadequacies in current law -- specifically, **inequitable facility funding** for charter facilities. In addition to making progress on facilities funding, **SB 1830 provides incentives for co-location with traditional ISDs, helps clarify drop-out computations, and streamlines the renewal process for current charter holders.** School success starts with

strong policy where educators are provided both the chance to innovate and the subsequent responsibility to uphold quality standards.

At the association we are also taking responsibly to improve the **operations of the vast majority of charter schools. Every single member of TCSA must sign a quality pledge to become a member.** TCSA is currently **developing that quality framework** and a benchmarking process for member schools that will provide a pathway to instructional and financial advice, help establish critical plans and controls, and ultimately **improve charter school quality across the board in Texas.**

Thank you for allowing me time. I'll be followed by distinguished members of our association who will speak to different elements of the legislation. **Chris Barbic**, the Founder of YES Prep will discuss facilities funding, and co-location with traditional ISDs -- an issue he is most familiar with. After Chris, **Arturo Suarez**, Executive Director of Positive Solutions, will speak about resolving the manner in which the state calculates a drop-out. And finally, **Cheryl Washington**, the CEO and Superintendent of Shekinah Learning Institute, will address the need to lift the state cap on charters and streamline a replication process so that we continue to **promote success where we create it.**

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