



SENATOR PAUL BETTENCOURT

DISTRICT 7

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Senator Bettencourt Says Parents Deserve to Choose the Best School for their Children Files SB 542 to allow tax credit scholarships and investment in the state's future workforce; attends National School Choice Week rally on Capitol grounds, receives "Education Champion Award"

AUSTIN – Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) filed Senate Bill 542, a companion bill to House Bill 1184 by Representative Dwayne Bohac (R-Houston), which would create a \$100 million school choice tax credit scholarship pilot program to help defray educational costs so parents can choose the best academic option for their children, in both private and public schools. The bill would allow corporations to invest in their future workforce by receiving an insurance premium tax credit from their state tax bill when they contribute to nonprofit agencies that award K-12 scholarships to students with financial and academic need. Senator Bettencourt also attended the National School Choice Week rally at the Capitol today and received the "Education Champion Award" for his commitment to empowering parents with more educational options.

"Tax credit scholarships can help the neediest kids get the education they deserve in Texas," Senator Bettencourt said. **"SB 542 does exactly that, while allowing private donations to help fund both public and private school scholarships. This is true public and private school choice,"** he added.

"The tax credit scholarship amounts are for significantly less than what the state currently spends on education per student, so there is an overall savings to the state," Senator Bettencourt added. **"In addition to the state savings, local school districts will have fewer children to educate as an estimated 15,000 to 18,000 students could participate in the program. This cost-savings program would be a win-win for students, teachers and Texas taxpayers alike."**

Other key points of SB 542 include:

- Private donations are made to community nonprofits that give scholarships to eligible families based on financial and academic need.
- The program is capped at \$100 million. Previous bills with a similar structure have consistently resulted in positive fiscal notes with hundreds of millions of dollars in savings to the state.
- Requires schools to meet or exceed Texas Education Agency (TEA) recognized accreditation and curriculum.
- Scholarships are 75 percent of the statewide maintenance and operations (M&O) funding or the maximum tuition, whichever is lower. In the 2014-15 school year, total M&O was \$9,740; scholarships would then be valued at \$7,300.
- Public school students are offered \$750 scholarships for academic support programs.
- The program is considered a pilot because it is capped at \$100 million, roughly 15,000 to 18,000 students.

"School choice has consistently been a priority of Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and is so again in the current legislative session. Senate Education Committee Chair Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood) will once again lead the Senate Education Committee in passing common sense legislation in this issue area," Senator Bettencourt concluded.

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