



Public Statement

Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr.

SEN. LUCIO CALLS ON GOV. ABBOTT TO PRIORITIZE CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE FALL SPECIAL SESSION

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AUSTIN, TX – Following media reports¹ that have brought to light financial malfeasance by the leadership of IDEA Public Schools, Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) issued the following statement supporting greater state oversight and public accountability for charter schools:

"Last year, I was shocked at reports of IDEA Public Schools' frivolous spending on a private jet and other items unrelated to improving student achievement. These improprieties were underscored by the resignation of IDEA's CEO, who received a payout of nearly one million dollars upon his resignation.

"This situation was bad enough at that point, and indeed I was successful in passing legislation that limits the amounts charter CEOs may receive when resigning². However, I was appalled to learn that the improprieties did not stop there, when a recent financial audit found 'substantial evidence' that additional IDEA leaders misused money and staff for personal gain. Again, these revelations caused some of the leaders responsible to resign, but the damage to the public trust has unfortunately already been done.

"To rebuild this trust, IDEA - and all charter schools - must commit to full transparency to the public. This effort must include requirements for accessible public meetings, transparent information on board members and their business interests, and protections for charter employees who report wrongdoing. All of these important safeguards were components of my bill, SB 1081, which regrettably we did not have enough time to hear in committee this regular session.

"To finish the uncompleted work of ensuring proper oversight of all Texas public schools, I am formally requesting that Governor Abbott add the subject of charter school accountability to the call for the upcoming special session. Taking legislative action now to prevent these abuses will ensure the public's trust is never broken again, and will help charter schools focus on their mission of educating the next generation of Texas leaders."

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¹ <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/education/article/IDEA-Public-Schools-fires-CEO-chief-operating-16202852.php>

² <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=87R&Bill=HB189>

Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D – Harlingen) represents Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Kleberg, and Willacy Counties. He is the Vice-Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance; Vice-Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education; and a member of the Senate Committee on State Affairs, Committee on Natural Resources & Economic Development, Special Committee on Redistricting, and Select Committee Texas Ports. He is also a member of the Sunset Advisory Commission and the DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Advisory Panel, and has been an ex-officio member of the DSHS Task Force of Border Public Health Officials since 2017. Elected to the Texas Senate in 1990, Lucio is third in seniority in the Senate.