

September 30, 2020

The Honorable Representative Dan Huberty
Chair, House Committee on Public Education
Texas House of Representatives
Austin, TX

Representative Huberty:

Related to Interim Charge 3, I respectfully request that the House Committee on Public Education consider legislation that would limit charter expansion amendments only to charter operators that in the previous year enrolled a percentage of students with special needs that was equivalent to the state average as reported on PEIMS.

In 2018-2019, public school districts and open enrollment charter schools enrolled an average of 9.6 percentage of students with special needs. However, the average percentage of students with disabilities enrolled at some charter schools was much lower, including:

- Basis Texas: 1.8 percent
- IDEA Public Schools: 5.4 percent
- YES Prep: 5.9 percent
- International Leadership of Texas: 5.4 percent
- Pioneer Technology and Arts Academy: 5.0 percent
- Great Hearts: 5.7 percent

In many cases, local district schools located in close proximity to these charter campuses served significantly higher percentages of students with special needs.

Yet, each of these charter schools listed above had new charter campuses approved through the charter expansion amendment process in 2020 despite significantly underserving students with special needs.

Not only do these lower percentages raise concerns about policies and procedures that may be in place at these charter schools to exclude students with special needs, they also raise serious issues about the fiscal impact on public school districts that serve higher percentages of students with special needs.

How can charters schools be allowed to expand if they do not ensure that they have policies and procedures in place to serve all students?

It is imperative that the Texas Education Agency provide more detailed data about the policies and procedures at charter schools that result in such disparities for students with special needs. TEA should also identify the fiscal impact on public school districts that serve higher percentages of students with special needs.

Sincerely,

Patti Everitt