

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3610

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

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Hearing Date: April 6, 2021 10:00 AM

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Paul Morrissey

Compass Rose Public Schools

San Antonio, TX

My name is Paul Morrissey, and I am the Founder and Superintendent of Compass Rose Public Schools in San Antonio, TX. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like Compass Rose provide an essential educational option for our community. We serve a student body that is 95% Hispanic/Latino or Black and 92% low income, and we aim to put every one of our 1,200 students on the path to success in college and the workforce. Our students are thriving, and our families love the option they have for a high-quality education in their Southside neighborhood. Over 95% of our families report they are satisfied or highly satisfied with school.

Yet Public Charters that lease their buildings – which many of us have to do, including Compass Rose – must pay property taxes at present. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes, and all public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help us continue to ensure our students get the world-class educational experience they deserve.

Jennifer Goodman, Dr.

Odyssey Academy Public Charter School

Galveston, TX

My name is Dr. Jennifer Goodman, and I am the Superintendent of Odyssey Academy in Galveston, Texas City, and the Clear Lake/Bay Area. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are providing choice for excellent educational opportunities for Texas families. Our students are thriving, yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent. Currently, we pay approximately \$70,000 per year in property taxes.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Thank you for your support of this bill.

Deyvis Salazar

Houston Classical Charter School

Houston, TX

My name is Deyvis Salazar and I'm the Founder of Houston Classical Charter School in Houston, Texas. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are

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thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Joanna Klekowicz  
The Gathering Place  
San Antonio, TX

My name is Joanna Klekowicz and I'm the Superintendent of The Gathering Place in San Antonio, TX. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Paul Castro  
A+UP Charter School  
Houston, TX

I am Paul Castro, Superintendent of A+UP Charter School in Houston.  
I am writing in strong support of HB 3610.

Parents choose our middle school because of the small safe environment we provide their children. We serve a high percentage of special needs children who need specialized programming and care. The money we spend on taxes is an unfair burden, and if removed, would allow us to add an additional staff member. That would help our kids and families tremendously.

I urge you to support HB 3610 and create equity for our kids and families.

Brent Wilson, Dr.  
Life School  
Red Oak, TX

I am in support of HB3610, which would grant charter schools that lease their buildings an exemption from property taxes, as long as those buildings are used exclusively by schools for educational purposes. We estimate this will save charters a total of about \$12 million annually. Whether a charter school supporter or not, this provision is in the best interest of Texas public school students because state tax dollars would remain in the classroom versus being diverted to pay taxes. Thank you for considering supporting this bill.

Larry Ray Reed  
Compass Rose Public Schools  
San Antonio, TX

I work for a charter school system that is growing and thriving. We currently lease all three of our facilities and will lease more

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facilities next year. By exempting ISDs from property taxes but not exempting charters, our rent is forced to be higher and therefore means more of our resources are used on facilities that could be used on instruction. Please level the playing field with this legislation.

Ryane Burke

Compass Rose Public Schools

Schertz, TX

My name is Ryane Burke and I'm the Executive Director of Compass Rose Public Schools in San Antonio. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Christi Barnes

Odyssey Academy Texas City

Texas City, TX

My name is Christi Barnes, and I am the principal Odyssey Academy in Texas City. I am writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent. Our charter currently pays about \$70,000 in property taxes each year. This money should be spend on students, not property taxes.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Thank you for your time,  
Christi Barnes

Kathleen Zimmermann

NYOS Charter School

AUSTIN, TX

My name is Kathleen Zimmermann and I am the Executive Director of NYOS Charter School in Austin. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent. NYOS will have spent \$12,000 just this year on property taxes for leased space. That money could better be used for instruction of students.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Thank you for your consideration.

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William Clark  
STEP Charter School  
Houston, TX

My name is William Clark and I'm the Superintendent of STEP Charter School. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

We are an A rated public charter school district. Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. WE CURRENTLY PAY \$140,000 A YEAR in PROPERTY TAXES. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Kendra Hawthorne, Ancillary Teacher  
Step Charter School  
Rosharon, TX

My name is Kendra Hawthorne and I'm the Middle School Ancillary Teacher of Step Charter School in Houston, Texas. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent, which essentially takes away from our students and families. Students learn best in a welcoming environment equipped with many learning tools and Teachers teach best in a beautiful environment equipped with many learning tools. Saving money would definitely help our Students, Teachers and Charter Schools everywhere.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level. Aren't the students and families what's most important? If we are required to give the same as others shouldn't we receive the same quality as others?

Jennifer Anderson  
Step Charter School/ Teacher  
Houston, TX

My name is Jennifer Anderson and I'm a teacher at Step Charter Elementary (11250 South Wilcrest, Houston, TX, 77099). I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

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Jae Mitchell  
Step Charter School  
Houston, TX

Good Evening,

I am writing in strong support of HB3610. To my understanding public and private schools are exempt from these taxes. As our charter schools grow we need to expand our educational opportunities. We all want the same thing in the end and that is to further educate our students. With this bill being passed we can do just that.

Narciso Garcia, Dr.  
Vanguard Academy Charter School  
Pharr, TX

My name is Dr. Narciso Garcia, Superintendent of Vanguard Academy Public Charter Schools, and I am writing in support of HB3610. Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings, which many of us have to do, and we must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent. The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Cameshia Guillory  
self- PEIMS Coordinator  
Houston, TX

Keep the money spent on property taxes into the charter schools where it can provide more educational opportunities to the students we serve!

Robin Osburn  
Priority Charter Schools  
Temple, TX

My name is Robin Osburn and I'm the CFO of Priority Charter Schools in Central Texas. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Carla Silber  
Orenda Charter School  
Round Rock, TX

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My name is Carla Silber and I'm the Superintendent of Orenda Charter School in Georgetown, TX. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Casey Ballard, Dir. Public Relations

Life School

Red Oak, TX

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities particularly those in underserved communities of color. Our students are succeeding thanks to the unique approach to leadership development and partnerships we cultivate with parents. Because Charters Schools do not receive facilities funding like traditional ISD's many charters lease their buildings. And then are charged property taxes from which traditional ISD's are exempt. This unfairly creates additional financial burden on charters who are working to create excellent educational opportunities for ALL students.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Athena Rael

Self

Katy, TX

My name is Athena Rael and I'm a math teacher at STEP Charter School in Houston, TX. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Public charter schools like mine are expanding the educational opportunities available to Texas families. Our students are thriving. Yet charter schools that lease their buildings -- which many of us have to do -- must pay property taxes. This forces us to take taxpayer education funding out of classrooms, where it would be best spent.

The vast majority of Texas schools are exempt from these taxes. All public charter schools deserve this same exemption. HB3610 will help educators continue to serve their students at the highest level.

Sara Bundrage

Step Charter School

Houston, TX

My name is Sara Bundrage and I'm the 4th/5th grade language arts teacher of STEP Charter School Houston, TX.. I'm writing in strong support of HB3610.

Justin Scott

KIPP Texas Public Schools

Austin, TX

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Thank you all for your service to the state of Texas. I am the Austin Regional Superintendent for KIPP Texas Public Schools and am in strong support of HB 3610.

KIPP Texas is a district of 59 public, open-enrollment and tuition free charter schools educating over 31,000 students in Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio.

Together with families and communities, we create joyful, academically excellent schools that prepare students with the skills and confidence to pursue the paths they choose — college, career, and beyond — so they can lead fulfilling lives and build a more just world. About 86% of our students are economically disadvantaged, 37% are English Language Learners, and 46% are considered at-risk.

Already, state law exempts all owned school facilities (private, public ISD, and public charter) from local property taxation. Leased facilities of private schools and public ISD schools are also exempt. Public charter schools are not exempt. We believe that there should be tax parity for all Texas students. If this bill were to pass, KIPP Texas would save roughly \$250,000 in property taxes on leased facilities at 10 of our campus sites across the state. As a regional leader, I could budget those dollars toward intervention curriculum and personnel to properly address the learning loss from Covid at half of my schools.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of this legislation. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can answer any questions.

Justin Scott  
Regional Superintendent, Austin  
KIPP Texas Public Schools

Chandra Villanueva  
Every Texan  
Austin, TX

Every Texan opposes HB 3610. This bill could encourage the practice used by some charter schools to create a related entity that can purchase a facility and lease it to the charter holder, setting lease payments without external review or monitoring. Once the facility is paid off, the related entity would own the facility – not the charter school which would continue to pay rent to the related party. If the charter moves or closes, the state would not own the facility – it would be owned by the related entity. Charter schools already receive state funding that can be used to pay property taxes. Charter school receive a per-student allotment for facilities and are allowed to use this funding to lease and pay property taxes.

Sarah Rivlin  
Community Voices for Public Education  
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. My tax dollars should be used to educate children, not to enrich individuals who don't need enriching. Exempting charter schools from property taxes when charter schools already receive state funding that can be used to pay property taxes is ridiculous. The money lost from those unpaid property taxes should be going to fund my children's neighborhood public schools. I am tired of watching my kids' schools starve while charter school operators get rich.