

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education  
For HB 2890

Compiled on: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 7:17 PM

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Hearing Date: March 28, 2023 8:00 AM

Jim Lennon  
KIngwood TEA Party  
Cleveland, TX

Kingwood TEA Party is for HB 2890.

James Lennon  
self  
Mobile, TX

I am for HB 2890

Tara Cummings, Dr.  
Self  
Cypress, TX

What the state desperately needs to do is invest in our locally-governed public schools, NOT make it easier for charter schools to roll in and erode or community schools and minimize Texans' voices in the decisions that our schools make. Our local public schools accept and educate ALLLLLLL Texas students, they are governed by democratically-elected trustees, and they are already catastrophically underfunded. Charter schools, however, get to choose which students they accept, their boards are not democratically-elected, and they have no accountability to the local community, and charter investors get rich.

As a former public school teacher, former psychologist in the public schools, parent of multiple current public school students, and a PROUD product of public school myself, I vehemently OPPOSE HB 2890.

Wendy Johnson

Self

Houston, TX

Please reject the passing of HB 2890. While I believe charters have some really great qualities and can be a benefit for the community, charter schools WITHOUT OVERSIGHT AND CONSISTENT GUIDELINES ARE NOT A BENEFIT TO ANYONE.

Please, please reject HB 2890 until a time when checks and balances can make the permit for a charter result in across-the-board quality education for it's students and in an accountability for legal use of the state funds that are provided to them. Currently, neither of those two prudent characteristics pertain to all charter schools in Texas.

It is detrimental to the students and to the responsible use of taxpayer money for charters to be permitted more readily without stricter guidelines of operation and accountability to a very clear state standard.

Thank you for considering an opposition to HB 2890 in it's current form.

Julie Hinaman

Self, stay at home mom

Cypress, TX

I OPPOSE HB 2890. The SBOE right to deny new/ expansion of charter schools should remain at a simple majority vote.

Jamie Wilson, Dr.

Self, Superintendent of Schools

Denton, TX

On the Bill, the rules for the number of votes required for a new charter school should strengthen not be lessened. The SBOE should be able to veto the commissioners' recommendation with a simple majority of the quorum present.

Rebecca Hamilton

Self

Smithville, TX

Vote YES for HB 2890

Donald Hamilton

Self

Smithville, TX

Vote YES ON HB 2890

Leonor Vargas

Self

Austin, TX

I do not support this bill, not good for our students and state

Virginia Gustin

Self

Round Rock, TX

I oppose this bill

DAVID BRADLEY

Self, Former member SBOE

Beaumont, TX

Mr. David Bradley, Former SBOE Member of 22 years

Testimony FOR House Bill 2890

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Public Education Committee:

My name is David Bradley and I served on the State Board of Education from 1997 to 2019. That period covered three Governors and seven Commissioners of Education.

I was involved with the charter authorization process from the beginning. It was basically the case that applicants just had to raise their right hand and promise to do a good job. But a lot has changed since then.

Today, it's a very good, very thorough process — and overwhelmingly, public charter schools are performing well. But there needs to be strong accountability to ensure that progress continues.

I support HB 2890, which would require a two-thirds majority of SBOE membership to veto a new public charter school. This is a good solution to a problem that I experienced many times and that persists to this day.

Some of you might remember the late SBOE member, Will Davis. He was the most senior member on the Board back when I was the most junior member. We didn't agree on much of anything — Will was a former Chair of the Travis County Democratic Party :). But we did agree on one thing.

There have always been SBOE Members who say, “Well, I don't like charter schools, so I'm not going to support this one.” Will would admonish them, saying, “The decision to issue charters has already been made by the Legislature.” I, too, had to make that same issue clear many times over my later service years.

SBOE Members seem to forget that it's their job to review the work of the TEA. It's their job to look at accountability, finances, governance, facilities – things that Agency staff have already worked through, but perhaps need a second look. It is not the job of SBOE Members to decide whether they want a new public charter school or how Texas should approach public charter schools.

That is for you, the Legislature, to decide. And SBOE members do have the ability to run for those seats. My sincere respects to Representative Allen. Alma, I thank you for your many years of service!

But we need to make sure these decisions aren't just about politics. HB 2890 will help solve that. It also makes the great point that the two-thirds majority requirement should apply to the full membership. I've seen too many games over the years where some folks leave to catch a plane and then at the back end of the ongoing meeting someone opportunistically declares, “Motion to reconsider.”

Requiring a two-thirds majority is also not without precedent. A two-thirds SBOE membership threshold is required to veto recommendations made by the State Board for Educator Certification. If it is appropriate in those circumstances, it is certainly appropriate regarding the issuance of public charter schools!

Thank you for supporting HB 2890.

Respectfully submitted,

David Bradley

Delaina Bishop

SELF/Parent

Austin, TX

I OPPOSE this bill.

Mark White  
self  
Houston, TX

This is another attack on the State Board of Education and the representatives elected by the citizens of Texas in favor of the power for the Commissioner appointed by the Governor.

Darlene Mattlage, Mrs  
Self and retired  
Belton, TX

Please support ! Thanks??

Michelle LoweSolis  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

I ask you to OPPOSE HB 2890. Today, a simple majority can reject a new charter school. This bill would require a two-thirds majority to reject a new charter. Charters are not accountable to the public. The legislature should be making it easier to reject a charter school, not easier.

Heather Sheffield  
Self, Texas Association of School Boards  
Austin, TX

Due to the fact that this bill would unnecessarily increase the voting threshold the Texas State Board of Education would have to reach to reverse a charter decision made by the commissioner of education, I respectfully oppose HB 2890.

It is important to note that the SBOE is the only publicly elected body that votes on whether to grant a private entity a new charter for an open-enrollment charter school. As it stands, the decision stands with an unelected and appointed commissioner of education who is not accountable to the parents and taxpayers of Texas.

The two-thirds threshold is also rare among elected bodies in Texas. To my knowledge, that high of a threshold is only necessary to amend the Texas Constitution and to overturn a veto from the governor. This bill would set a dangerous precedent for requiring such high voting thresholds for elected bodies for such routine business.

Further, the SBOE has been very judicious in its legislatively granted power to consider the commissioner's charter school decisions. It has vetoed only 15 out of 52 applications since 2013 when it was granted that power.

That means SBOE members have only reversed 29% of commissioner approvals while they have approved 71%.

These denials have only improved the charter system in Texas, as many applicants have been forced to consider the reasons why their applications were denied, improve their applications and business plans to adjust for the feedback provided by agency staff and the SBOE, and then reapply and earn approval in subsequent years.

Elected SBOE members serve as an important check and balance to the recommendations made by the unelected commissioner, and we should be looking for ways to strengthen their role in charter approvals and oversight instead of weakening it.

Emmanuel Garcia  
Self  
HOUSTON, TX

I oppose sacrificing charter schools.

Belkys Mora-Rodriguez  
Self. Elementary Teacher.  
Katy, TX

I am a taxpayer in Harris County and am employee at CFISD and I am opposed to HB 2890 and I would like the representative to vote against it.

Virginia Flores  
Self/ Cypress Fairbanks ISD.  
Cypress, TX

The proliferation of charter schools will continue to get worse in Texas if the process to deny additional new charters is diluted with policies such as HB 2890.

I am a taxpayer in CFISD and opposed to HB 2890 and would like you to consider voting against it. Charter schools do not work for the public and the good of ALL students.

Julie Long  
Cypress Fairbanks ISD  
Cypress, TX

Public schools are already underfunded without charter schools' diversion of our money. Charter schools do not provide for the basic needs of students who qualify as special-needs, nor are they required to meet state education standards, like public schools' standards, set by TEA. Please vote against this house bill, and keep funding where it belongs...In public schools, for all students.

Tara Brown  
Teacher  
Cypress, TX

I am opposed to HB 2890 and would like you to consider voting against the bill.

Frances Romero  
Taxpayer in Cy-Fair ISD  
Houston, TX

Dear Texas Public House Committee Members:

I am a taxpayer in the Cy-Fair ISD area. Please vote NO on HB 2890 relating to the approval of open-enrollment charter schools. This bill weakens our elected State Board of Education's ability to fairly and responsibly deny new charters in Texas. Our public school systems will continue to be undermined and compromised by the proliferation of charters. Texas does not need new charters. Please vote NO and do not allow this bill to pass through Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kindly,  
Frances Romero  
8818 Bonnyview Dr.  
Houston, Tx 77095

Belinda Savage  
Self, teacher  
Tomball, TX  
Opposed!!

Silvia Smith  
Self  
Cypress, TX

Vote No to 2/3 vs majority vote. Vote NO TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.

Susan Martin  
Self  
Houston, TX

The creation of more and more charter and private schools in Texas only serves to show the public discontent with the state of public education in Texas. Instead of making it easier for more charter schools and kids to attend private schools, Texas needs to take a hard look at why we are 49th in the nation for funding our students education. Our legislators need to look at the TEA and testing rules, demands on teachers etc. and listen to actual educators to understand why families are so concerned - fix funding problems, over crowding, and overworked teacher problems in our public schools - schools that serve all children - and we won't have a need for more schools that find loopholes in governing and don't have to face public scrutiny regarding their data and success the same as public schools. Fix public education, don't take it away.

Spencer Wagley, Mr.  
Self, teacher  
Cypress, TX

I ask you to oppose HB 2890 to help protect the funding of our schools and to prevent the expansion of less accountable charity schools unless greater responsibilities are enacted.

Deanna Hicks  
self / educator  
Cypress, TX

I oppose this bill. Charter schools should be held to the same standard as school districts. If this bill passes, the quality of education children receive in charter schools will decline. Students bounce in and out of charter schools, often returning to their previous public school district, and they are very unprepared. This especially happens with students with special needs. The bill should maintain the current approval process on new charters by the State Board of Education. Passing this bill would make it more difficult for the State Board of Education to deny a new charter. We have enough already. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Jamie Brotemarkle, Principal  
CFISD  
Cypress, TX

Please do not allow this bill to pass!

Samantha Deramo  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am an elementary school teacher and taxpayer. I am opposed to HB 2890 and think my state representative should consider voting against it.

Jennifer McCrea  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am in opposition of this bill. It doesn't need to be easier to approve charter schools that continue to defund ACTUAL education.

David Pollock, Mr.  
Self, Field Service Engineer  
Houston, TX

Father of a 9 year old who attends public school. Our family is OPPOSED to HB 2890

Mark Saffer  
Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District Resident  
Houston, TX

I believe that we need to be very careful in how we allow the approval of Charter Schools and making the approval process easier is dangerous to the system that is meant to help our students. Charter schools are not subject to the same scrutiny of public schools and if we allow more to come on board without sufficient review and approval, we are potentially lowering the standards of education within Texas.

Robin Palacios, Mrs.  
Self  
Katy, TX

I am a taxpayer in Cy Fair ISD and am opposed to Bill 2890 please do not pass this Bill 2890.

Meagan Drilling  
Taxpayer in CFISD  
Cypress, TX

I am a taxpayer in CFISD and opposed to HB 2890. I would like the Representative to consider voting against it.

Michael Murr  
Murr Incorporated  
cypress, TX

OPPOSITION to HB 2890

Maria Guzman, Mrs  
CFISD  
Cypress, TX

Public schools needs the funding to offer a good education to every child.

Virginia Stout, Dr.  
Self  
Katy, TX

I am a taxpayer in Katy ISD and am opposed to HB 2890 and would like my Representative to consider voting against it.

Adam Stout  
Self  
Katy, TX

I am a taxpayer in Katy ISD and am opposed to HB 2890 and would like my Representative to consider voting against it.

Toni Speer  
Self  
Houston, TX  
Oppose

Teresa Bell  
Public Education  
Cypress, TX

I oppose HB 2890. Please vote no to this bill. What happens is that when a student doesn't make it in a charter school, the child returns to public school and we have to attempt to close the achievement gaps that are created. Charter schools are not good for Texas.

Bill Gafford, Mr.  
Self/Retired  
Cypress, TX

I oppose the bill as written. It would make it harder to reject the approval of a charter school.

Kendra Camarena  
Sled  
Houston, TX

I oppose HB 2890 and ask the committee to vote against the bill.  
UT News article, A Missed Opportunity to Add Oversight to Charter Schools, written June 10th, 2021 states: "Charter schools in Texas are granted autonomy from many state regulations in order to create innovative programs that promote student achievement, but a lack of public oversight has too often led to fraud, waste and abuse. Texas needs to create a strong proactive system of oversight as instances of mismanagement of public funds are well documented within the state's charter sector." I could not agree more with this statement knowing the numbers of charter schools investigated, prosecuted, and found guilty of this across the state of Texas. I am sure that the body is aware of those numbers as well. Therefore, I ask: Why would anyone want to perpetuate less oversight knowing the numbers of fraud and mismanagement of charter schools in Texas by increasing the vote from a majority to 2/3 to "vote against" a charter school application? Instead, we should be creating more oversight to prevent the misuse of taxpayer funded dollars and ensure that the academic programs are meeting state academic achievement standards. Please oppose HB 2890 to ensure good fiscal management of taxpayer dollars.

Mike Contreras, Principal  
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD  
Cypress, TX

Opposition - The proliferation of charter schools will continue to get worse in Texas if the process to deny additional new charters is diluted with policies such as HB 2890.

Pamela Trejo  
Self - project manager  
Cypress, TX

I am a taxpayer in CFISD and my children attend cfisd schools. We are a great school district as is and don't need charter schools. Please vote against HB2890.

Lesley Guilmart

Self

Cypress, TX

Vote no to HB 2890. Charters weaken our public schools by draining them of funding. Yet they don't have to serve every student. This is harmful. Let's focus on adequately funding and supporting the schools that serve EVERYONE instead. Again, vote no on HB 2890.

Ruben Garcia Mejia

Self

Cypress, TX

I am a tax payer parent of two children in the CYFAIR ISD school district and I am writing to let you know that I am in opposition of the approval of this new bill. I consider that regardless it is said that public school budget will not be affected for next year, this is not accurate and in the long run it will be. Unless of course our taxes go up to subsidize the charter and private schools thru the new program. I'm also concerned that the level of accountability for the private schools will not be the same as for the public schools and I'm worried about the creation of scam schools, similarly as with the scam college school scandals from past years. I think that this bill will only benefit private school owners, will increase the cost of education for everybody and will not completely allow all middle income families to enroll children in these private schools since it won't cover the costs in the long run. So basically is subsidizing families with high income that are already enrolled in these schools.

Kerrin Watson

Self - Retired teacher

Cypress, TX

I oppose HB 2890. Approval of charter schools should require the approval of all SBOE members.

Tammy Conrad

Self

Round Rock, TX

As a public school educator, I oppose this bill.

Tracy Roberson

Cfisd

Cypress, TX

I am a resident of cypress, tx and the cy fair school district. I oppose the approval of HB2890. The proliferation of charter schools will continue to get worse in Tx if the process to deny additional charter schools is diluted with policies like HB2890

Kim Morgan

Self Mother

Cypress, TX

OPPOSITION TO HB 2890 because the proliferation of charter schools will continue to get worse in Texas if the process to deny additional new charters is diluted with policies such as HB 2890.

Amy Beneski, Deputy Executive Director  
Texas Association of School Administrators  
Austin, TX

March 28, 2023

Re: HB 2890 relating to the approval of open-enrollment charter schools.

Dear Chairman Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony respectfully in opposition to HB 2890 as filed by Rep. Cunningham. Charter schools continue to grow in Texas and currently account for 7 percent of public-school students and 18.5 percent of state funding/revenue for public schools.

It is critical that taxpayer voices are heard through their elected State Board of Education (SBOE) officials in deciding whether to increase the number of charter schools in Texas. HB 2890 would now require a two-third's majority (10 of 15 members) of the total membership of the SBOE to veto a proposed charter instead of a majority of members of the board.

This bill allows only six of the 15 elected SBOE members to ensure approval of new charters put forth by the commissioner of education. Being granted a charter in Texas is a privilege and not a right. Proper vetting by TEA and the SBOE's ability to veto charters deemed unfit by a majority vote are critical measures that ensure Texas voters and taxpayers have a voice. High quality charter schools should be able to demonstrate through the current TEA and SBOE processes that they are qualified to operate in the state. The majority vote of the SBOE as elected officials is vital as the charter school system expands every year and takes a greater share of public-school funding from the state.

TASA appreciates the opportunity to provide information on HB 2890. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Amy Beneski  
Deputy Executive Director, Governmental Relations  
abeneski@tasanet.org  
(512) 477-6361

Theresa Williams, Superintendent  
Plano ISD  
Plano, TX

Plano ISD opposes HB 2890.

Gretchen Pierce  
Self/SAHM  
Austin, TX

I am a mother of two young children, including a kindergartener at an AISD school. I urge you to vote against HB 2890, which will make it easier for unaccountable charter schools to be established. A simple majority vote should be sufficient to oppose a new charter school. Increasing the threshold to two-thirds of the board will make it more difficult for these elected officials to hold charter applicants accountable. This is the only elected oversight in the charter approval process and making it more difficult for the SBOE to reject poor quality charters will result in the proliferation of more bad charter operators, and likely even more charter school financial scandals.

Thank you for your time and the work you do for our state.

Sarah Terrell  
self, retired  
Houston, TX

I am opposed to HB 2890 which will change the rules for the SBOE in vetoing new charter school applications, from a simple majority to a requirement that two thirds (10 out of 15) of the SBOE must oppose the new charter. This will allow a minority of 6 members to block any vetoes. SBOE has vetoed only 15 of 52 applications ever. These organizations may reapply, sometimes after donating to the campaigns of candidates that will support their application if elected. When campaign money is such an issue in Texas, why should we supercharge the ability of the wealthy charter industry to override the voices of other Texans? Each application strongly affects the specific geographic community where it will locate, yet 6 strongly pro-charter members will be able to override the communities' concerns completely. This rule change is a gift to the charter industry, which already has a wide-open highway to expand in Texas through the SBOE.

Stacye Anderson  
self - taxpayer in Cypress, TX  
Houston, TX

Please OPPOSE HB 2890. This bill proposes to require the SBOE to have a 2/3 vote to oppose the approval of new charter school applications approved by TEA rather than a simple majority.

Cynthia Henry  
Self  
Cypress, TX

Vote NO. This bill that requires 2/3 of the State School Board to oppose new charters rather than a simple majority is just another attach on public schools. The state needs to stop this irresponsible push to privatize Texas schools. This bill is not in the best interest of our state or our children. Do not support this bill.

Amanda Erickson  
self  
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on this bill. Instead of this solution looking for a problem, why not propose fully funding our public schools and making them safer for all kids.

Jackie Besinger, Mrs.  
Self  
Austin, TX

Good day committee members, I am Jackie Besinger, I hold both an MBA- MHA. Within my Master of Healthcare Administration. I am against bill HB2890 because we already have a majority vote. This bill is a waist to time.

Jackie Besinger, MBA-MHA  
jackiebesinger@protonmail.com

Lynn Boswell

Austin ISD Board of Trustees

Austin, TX

I am Lynn Boswell, a trustee of the Austin ISD and am testifying on behalf of the district. The district opposes HB 2890. Prior to the legislative session, the Board of Trustees unanimously adopted legislative priorities including opposition to: The further expansion of publicly funded charter schools, including increases in the number of campuses under existing charters, unless charter schools are subject to the same accountability and transparency laws and regulations as community-based public schools.

As elected officials, Texas trustees live in the communities we serve, are chosen by those communities, are deeply connected with our communities, and answer to those communities. We honor rules designed to ensure transparency including public hearings and regular meetings to discuss our students' academic performance, requirements about adopting a budget, regularly informing the public about our finances, and giving the community we serve a chance to be heard about district policies, district spending, and important decisions like hiring a superintendent or setting district priorities. We believe in these systems for ensuring the public has a voice in one of our most public institutions – the schools that educate more than 5.4 million Texas students.

The SBOE is the only publicly elected body that gives Texas voters, taxpayers and parents a voice in the decision about whether to grant a private entity a new charter for an open-enrollment charter school. By requiring a 2/3 vote, HB 2890 would dilute the authority of elected SBOE members to veto charter applications that will not serve Texas students well.

A super-majority is not representative of the values Texans hold and is not in the best interest of Texas students. It gives just six SBOE members out of 15 the power to approve new charters. And it could erode the ability of communities most affected by new applications to have a meaningful voice in the approval process.

SBOE has used its veto power judiciously and carefully, vetoing only 15 charter applications out of 52 approved since the Texas Legislature granted it that authority. New applications have been rejected only after an open public meeting and many days of interviews. And vetoes have always been with a bipartisan majority acting for good cause.

In Austin ISD, charters educate more than 15,000 students zoned to our district. They are doing well under the current system. The impact of charters in our community is vast. Over three years, Austin ISD has lost more than \$397,000,000 to charter operators. Our recapture – soon to reach a staggering \$1.1 billion per year – rises with each student who chooses a charter. We recognize that charter schools are a fact of our landscape, and an option open to Texas families. But we also recognize that tilting the odds in favor of even more rapid expansion is not in the interest of Texas taxpayers, Texas voters or Texas students—regardless of which type of school their families choose.