

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 4148

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Our education policy team at Reason Foundation provides state policymakers with national research, state-level analysis, and pro-bono technical support on topics such as improving school finance systems and best practices for public school open enrollment programs.

In a recent 50-state study, we found that Texas's existing student transfer law restricts educational opportunities for students, lacks transparency, and lags behind many other states, such as Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Florida that have robust public school open enrollment policies in place. The provisions in House Bill 4148 would strengthen Texas's policy in ways that research suggests would provide substantial benefits to both students and school districts.

Importantly, the legislation makes it easier for students to attend a public school outside of their residentially assigned public school district or catchment areas by specifying limited grounds for districts to deny transfer applicants, such as lack of school capacity. Texas HB 4148 also specifies how districts should admit transfer students if the number of applications exceeds district or school capacity—ensuring that public school districts don't unfairly discriminate against applicants.

Additionally, the bill establishes reporting requirements that would provide parents, legislators, and school district officials with critical information. This transparency will give students greater access to opportunities and provide policymakers with the data needed to improve the policy over time.

Studies consistently show that students transfer to higher-performing school districts when given the opportunity. For instance, students in Wisconsin tend to transfer to districts with better results on state exams and over two-thirds of transfer students in Florida enrolled in districts with graduation rates above the state mean.

But there's more to open enrollment than just academics. Research also finds that students transfer for diverse reasons, such as to escape bullying and to access instructional approaches, programs, and courses that aren't available in their assigned school districts.

Studies also demonstrate that open enrollment can have positive competitive effects on school districts. For example, a 2021 report by California's Legislative Analyst's Office found that districts that lost students to the state's District of Choice program responded by gathering feedback from families, evaluating programmatic offerings, and implementing reforms that led to fewer students transferring out. They also produced greater improvements in math and English language arts proficiency rates over time.

Adopting a strong open enrollment policy would ensure that public schools are truly available to all of Texas's 5.4 million students so that they can attend the public school that best fits their needs.