



# 5 MILLION REASONS

# WE NEED STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

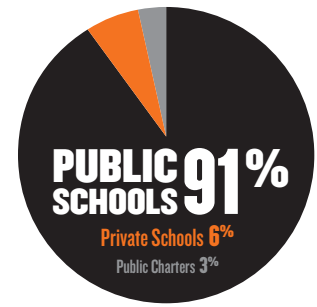
## RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

83rd Texas Legislature

### Texas public schools educate 5 million students.

That's 5 million reasons we need strong Texas public schools. Raise Your Hand Texas believes our public schools remain the best tool we have as a state to create the most opportunity for the most people. Raise Your Hand Texas is working to make the following changes through the Texas legislature to strengthen our public schools:

### WHO EDUCATES 5 MILLION TEXAS STUDENTS?



PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS	PUBLIC CHARTERS
4,823,842	313,360	154,278

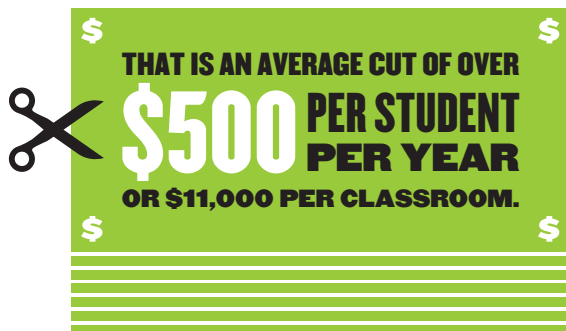


SUPPORT

### Restore Critical Funding for Texas Public Schools

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million reasons to implement better and fairer funding for our public schools.

Last session \$5.3 billion was slashed from state funding for public schools. Texas ranks second nationally in total public school enrollment - but 45th in the nation in per-student spending in 2011-2012.



Raise Your Hand Texas supports restoring critical funding for Texas public schools by:

- Restoring the \$5.3 billion in cuts to public education from last session, and fully funding student enrollment growth.
- Implementing a school finance system that is logical, fair and appropriately funded.



SUPPORT

### Improve the Accountability System

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million students and families who deserve an accurate picture of the quality of their schools.

Raise Your Hand Texas is encouraged by the work being done by the Texas Education Agency and stakeholders to make significant changes to the state accountability system.

Proposals to improve the accountability system should:

- Consider a variety of measures in arriving at an accountability rating, including student progress, while not making rating dependent on a single measure;
- Consider factors other than performance on state assessments, including AP/IB and dual credit participation, graduation rates, CTE participation and similar measures of student achievement;
- Provide meaningful performance results that the public can easily assess and understand; and
- Simplify and align standards and reporting under the state and federal accountability systems.



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### Reduce High-Stakes Testing

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million reasons to cut back on excessive exams and concentrate on actual learning, not just "teaching to the test."

Texas currently has by far the highest number of required end-of-course exams of any state that requires end of course exams for graduation. Raise Your Hand Texas supports:

- Reducing the number of required end of course exams;
- Giving local districts permanent flexibility from the 15% grading requirement; and
- Directing the Commissioner to expedite the implementation of rules to allow AP/IB exams and Dual Credit course completion to satisfy EOC requirement in that subject.



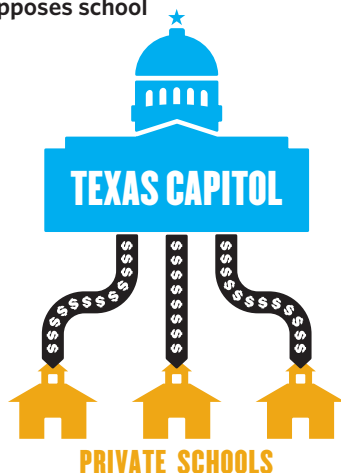
### Oppose School Vouchers

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million reasons why vouchers are not a solution - they're a distraction.

No matter what you call them - Taxpayer Savings Grants, Tax Credit Scholarships, Tuition Affordability or School of Last Resort vouchers - school vouchers divert taxpayer funds to fund private schools at taxpayer expense.

Raise Your Hand Texas opposes school vouchers in any form.

We call tax credit scholarships Texas Two Step vouchers. The extra step of the tax credit is designed to dodge the difficult legal and political issues of providing public money to support private schools.



### Fund Pre-K and Reward High Quality Pre-K Programs

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million reasons to invest in quality Pre-K programs that give young children a great start on their education and can close the achievement gap before it starts.

Raise Your Hand Texas supports:

- Restoring funding for Prekindergarten Early Start Grants, which allows districts to expand Pre-K or offer a full-day program.
- Restoring funding for the School Readiness Certification System, which evaluates the quality of Pre-K programs.
- Rewarding high-performing Pre-K programs receiving a Pre-K Center of Excellence designation two years in a row with formula funding for full-day Pre-K for qualifying 4-year-olds.



### Increase Career and Technical Course Options for Texas Students

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. That's 5 million reasons to prepare students for future careers by increasing the number of available career and technical education (CTE) courses that satisfy math and science requirements for graduation.

Raise Your Hand Texas supports:

- Creating greater flexibility in graduation plans for Texas high school students with courses of comparable rigor.
- Increasing the number of approved CTE courses that satisfy the math and science requirements for graduation by:
  - Directing the State Board of Education to increase the number of approved CTE courses that satisfy math and science requirements for graduation by a date certain;
  - Encouraging school districts to apply to the State Board of Education for approval of additional career and technical education courses, and requiring the SBOE to act on them within 180 days; and
  - Directing the State Board of Education to review available CTE courses from its 2009 study, and to expedite revision and approval of those courses.





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### Support Stronger Authority to Close Failing Charter Schools

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. While only 3% of students attend charter schools, stronger statutory protections are needed to close failing charter schools that fail Texas students and families. Acting swiftly to close failing charters protects Texas students and families while creating more opportunities for high-performing charters to serve students.

#### Raise Your Hand Texas supports:

- Strengthening charter school enforcement by adopting key recommendations of Texas Sunset Advisory Commission staff, including:
  - Requiring the Commissioner to revoke charter for failure to meet fiscal or accountability standards for three years in a row;
  - Giving the Commissioner authority to suspend operations or revoke charter in the case of insolvency;
  - Strengthening the charter renewal process so that the Commissioner may revoke charters for accountability, fiscal, governance or other failure to comply with the terms of a charter; and
  - Strengthening charter governance by authorizing the Commissioner to reconstitute charter boards, and apply nepotism and conflict of interest standards.
- Issuing a five-year provisional license rather than a charter to new applicants so that only the best and most qualified entities operate charter schools.
- Maintaining existing TEA standards that allow high-performing charters to open new campuses without obtaining a new charter (“replication”).



#### Raise Your Hand Texas opposes:

Significant expansion of the current cap on the number of charters until significant progress is made in revoking poor-performing charters.



### Support Stronger Accountability and Transparency for Virtual School Providers

Texas public schools educate 5 million students. While full-time virtual school providers educate only a small fraction of them, their enrollment has grown rapidly despite poor academic results and little transparency.

During the last four years, the number of Texas students enrolled in full-time online education has **more than quadrupled**. But full-time virtual education is riddled with problems, including poor academic performance and a lack of transparency.

#### Raise Your Hand Texas supports:

- Closing the loophole that allows poor performing virtual school providers to evade consequences by switching host districts or charters;
- Maintaining existing TEA oversight and accountability standards for virtual school providers;
- Maintaining existing eligibility requirements;
- Increasing transparency and reporting of virtual school provider contracts, cost and performance outcomes, and requiring financial audits.
- Requiring a trusted third party to administer state assessments for virtual school students.
- Limiting expansion of virtual schools to high-performing virtual school providers, as is currently done with charters.
- Ensuring that virtual schools are subject to frequent, independent third party assessments.



#### Raise Your Hand Texas opposes:

Allowing virtual school providers to deliver courses outside of the Texas Virtual School Network, or to receive direct funding for students using taxpayer funds.

**Texas is responsible for the education of 5 million students. That’s 5 million reasons to work together for strong public schools.**