



GINA N. CALANNI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

District 132

Committees: Homeland Security & Public Safety • Juvenile Justice & Family Issues

July 28, 2020

The Honorable Mike Morath
Commissioner
Texas Education Agency
William B. Travis Building
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: Pending Charter Expansions

Dear Commissioner Morath:

On behalf of my constituents and the school districts I represent, I would like to personally thank you and your staff for your efforts to support public education and educators throughout this unprecedented public health crisis.

Recently, at the State Board of Education meeting, you were asked about the approval of nearly 100 charter school amendments, which appear to still be pending. I want to urge you to deny the approval of all charter expansion amendments in 2020 in consideration of the additional costs that these expansions would bring to both state and local taxpayers. The approval of these nearly 100 charter expansions would mean an additional cost to the state of approximately \$90 million annually above the cost to the system if these students were enrolled in a public school district. This would come at a time when all state agencies and school districts are facing significant budget crises. In addition, at least one charter requesting expansion is currently being investigated by TEA after whistleblower complaints about the treatment of students with special needs.



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I also want to echo the April 3, 2020 letter from eighteen educational organizations concerned about sustaining state funding for House Bill 3 given the dire state budget projections and unbudgeted costs that schools will incur as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. These education advocates asked that all available funding for public education be used to sustain the improvements from House Bill 3 and to help existing schools meet the new challenges resulting from the current crisis. In this letter, the organizations were unified in a request that the commissioner “limit approval of all charter expansion amendments in 2020 in consideration of the additional costs to the state that would result from an increase in charter enrollment.”

As you know, TEA rules allow for approval of a charter amendment only if the amendment is “in the best interests of the students of Texas” (TAC 100.1033(b)(9)(A)(viii)). Like these eighteen educational organizations, I ask that you use your discretion to make the financially prudent decision to deny charter school expansion amendments in 2020 in the best interest of all of our public schools. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 463-0528.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gina N. Calanni".

Gina N. Calanni
State Representative, House District 132



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