

**SUBJECT:** Requiring auditions for charter schools that specialize in performing arts

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Delisi, Dutton, Eissler, Hochberg, B. Keffer, Mowery

0 nays

1 absent — Oliveira

**WITNESSES:** For — Dollie Blevins, Don Cosby, Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts; Texas Boys Choir, Inc.

Against — None

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 12.111(a), prohibits charter schools from discriminating in admission policy on the basis of academic, artistic, or athletic ability.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1111 would authorize a charter school that specialized in one or more performing arts to require an applicant to audition for admission to the school.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2005. The bill would apply beginning with the 2005-06 school year.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 1111 would allow charter schools specializing in the performing arts to ensure that students who attended these schools had a genuine interest and aptitude for the program by requiring that students audition as part of the admissions process, in the same way that public magnet schools require students to audition or apply for admission. Charter schools, like magnet schools, should be allowed to select students based on their interest in and aptitude for the subject on which the program is based. This would ensure the success of students as well as the program.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Charter schools are publicly funded and should be open to all students who have an interest in the program. A student who did not initially show an aptitude for a program by performing well in an audition may have the commitment and interest to excel.

OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Charter schools should be allowed even broader discretion in selecting and admitting students, such as holding a lottery if the number of applicants exceeded the number of available positions. Charter schools were created to provide alternatives to traditional public schools, and they should have broad latitude in taking measures needed to achieve their goals.

NOTES:

The committee substitute removed a provision of the original version of the bill that would have allowed charter schools to require auditions for a student to proceed from one grade level to the next and, if the number of applicants exceeded the number of available openings, to hold a lottery for male and female applicants so that the number of males and females admitted were equal.