

- SUBJECT:** Requiring a common admission form for charter schools
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, K. Bell, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Allison, Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For — James Schiele, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD; Angel Rivera, Mesquite ISD; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* David Anderson, Arlington ISD Board of Trustees; Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Colby Nichols, Fast Growth School Coalition; Deborah Caldwell, North East ISD; Bob Popinski, Raise Your Hand Texas; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Patty Quinzi, Texas-American Federation of Teachers; Robert Norris; Heather Sheffield)
- Against — Connor Cook and Starlee Coleman, Texas Charter Schools Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Brent Wilson, Life School; Joe Hoffer)
- On — Catharine Bellinger, IDEA Public Schools; Heather Mauze and Melody Parrish, Texas Education Agency; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Hannah LaPorte, IDEA Public Schools; Pablo Barrera, TCSA; Eric Marin and Chris Jones, Texas Education Agency; Heather Smith)
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2621 would establish a common admission application form for use in charter school enrollment. The bill also would require charter

schools to report information on waiting lists for enrollment.

The bill would require the commissioner of education to adopt by rule a common admission application form for applicants to open-enrollment charter schools. The form would have to provide for the submission of information the commissioner considered appropriate and could not advertise or otherwise promote any person or charter school or solicit money, goods, or services from an applicant.

The form would have to be adopted by January 1, 2020, and be posted on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website.

The commissioner by rule would have to adopt guidelines for a charter school that received more acceptable applications than available positions at the school to create and manage a waiting list each school year.

Not later than the last Friday in October of each school year, the governing body of a charter holder would have to report to TEA for that school year the following information for each campus:

- the number of students enrolled;
- the enrollment capacity;
- if a charter holder used a waiting list, the total number of students on the waiting list and the number of students on the list disaggregated by grade level; and
- any information required by the commissioner as necessary to identify each student admitted to or put on a waiting list who was or had been previously enrolled in a Texas public school.

From information provided to the commissioner by each charter holder under the bill, the commissioner would have to identify each group of charter holders considered by the commissioner to be corporate affiliates or substantially related charter holders. TEA would have to aggregate the enrollment and waiting list information for each group of charter holders.

By March 15 of each year, the commissioner would have to post on the

TEA website the enrollment and waiting list information reported by charter holders and the information aggregated for affiliated or related charter holders.

The commissioner would be required to adopt any other rules as necessary to implement the bill, including rules to ensure the bill complied with federal law on confidentiality of student medical or educational information and state law relating to privacy of student information.

Charter schools would have to use the application forms in submitting the data required by the bill beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2621 would ensure transparency and accountability in the enrollment processes of charter schools by requiring the use of a common admission application form. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) would determine appropriate questions on the application form to avoid the use of inappropriate questions by an individual school. Such a form could help students wishing to enroll in a charter school because they would have to fill out only one form instead of completing applications for several area schools.

The bill also would require TEA to collect data on charter school waiting lists so that policymakers had an accurate understanding of how many students were waiting to get into Texas charter schools. Waiting lists currently are reported by schools voluntarily to a charter school association, creating questions about whether some applicants who applied to more than one school could be double counted on waiting lists. An accurate waiting list could help determine neighborhoods where there is a need for expanded charter school opportunities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 2621 would be an unnecessary and costly expansion of state government involvement into the admission process of individual charter

schools. There is a wide variety of charter schools and some serve special populations, so it is appropriate to allow individualized application forms. Charter schools already maintain and manage waiting lists and do not need TEA to collect this data.

NOTES:

The Legislative Budget Board estimates CSHB 2621 would have a negative impact of \$343,409 through the biennium ending August 31, 2021.