

Why I Voted for School Choice

By State Representative Don McLaughlin

After months of debate and pushback from entrenched interests, school choice has officially passed the Texas House—and I proudly voted yes.

I joined President Trump, Senator Ted Cruz, Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, and Attorney General Ken Paxton in standing up for parents and delivering on a promise to Texas families. This is a historic step forward for students, parents, and the future of education in our state.

Over the past several months, I've sat down with school administrators and board members across House District 80 to hear their concerns. Some conversations led to common ground. Others didn't—largely because school choice threatens a system that, for far too long, has operated without accountability. But I didn't run for office to defend the status quo. I ran to make it better.

On the campaign trail, I promised to never support anything that guts our public schools. I meant it. Senate Bill 2 doesn't defund public education—it expands opportunity. In fact, SB 2 was passed alongside House Bill 2, which invests a historic \$7.7 billion into our schools, including an average of nearly \$2,100 more per student for school districts in Uvalde County. These bills work together to strengthen public education while finally giving families the freedom to choose what's best for their child.

We also have to face the facts. In Dilley ISD, over \$27,000 is spent per student—but only 22% meet grade-level standards. In Uvalde CISD, \$11,700 is spent per student, yet only 27% are on grade level. These numbers aren't cherry-picked—they reflect a disturbing trend across our region. More money hasn't meant better results.

School choice changes that. Senate Bill 2 empowers parents—not bureaucracies—with the tools to find a better fit for their child. Education Savings Accounts open the door to options that were once out of reach: private schools, charter schools, micro-schools, homeschool co-ops, and hybrid learning models. These ideas are already flourishing in other parts of Texas. It's time they reach rural communities like ours.

Let me be clear: This is not a threat to public education—it's a lifeline. When schools know they are accountable to families, not just institutions, everyone wins. This bill is about building a system that works for kids—not the other way around.

We cannot afford to ignore failure. Our children deserve better. They deserve choices. And now, they'll have them.