

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Public Testimony on HB 749



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The stated purpose of HB 749 is to prevent taxpayer funds from being spent to lobby against the interests of taxpayers. However, HB 749 does not prohibit taxpayer funds from being spent on lobbying, but instead prevent specific local governments, such as school districts from spending money on lobbying. Other taxpayer-funded entities, such as charter schools, which are 100% taxpayer-funded, and government contractors who receive taxpayer dollars, would continue to be able to spend money on lobbying activities. Additionally, school districts are governed by an elected board of representatives of taxpayers who can exercise oversight over expenditures on lobbying activities to ensure those activities coincide with taxpayers' interests, unlike charter schools which have no direct oversight by elected officials.

Frisco ISD is committed to working with legislators to advance the interests of the millions of public school students in the state of Texas. To that end, the District created a Legislative Leadership Committee, which is made up of 90 stakeholders from across the District, including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to recommend legislative priorities for adoption by the Board. That committee recommended the Board adopt a legislative priority to maintain the right of school districts to interact with legislators in the ways deemed most effective by local communities. Yet HB 749 would take that decision away from local communities.

That said, Frisco ISD, and most school districts, do not spend money to contract with lobbyists. Frisco ISD employs government affairs staff who are not registered lobbyists, and as a matter of practice, the District does not take positions on pending legislation. However, Fisd, like virtually every school district in the state of Texas, is a member of the Texas Association of School Boards. TASB provides crucial services for school districts including support on policy development, human resources issues, legal support, required training, and government affairs work. HB 749 would prevent school districts from paying dues to TASB in an effort to prevent taxpayer funds from being spent on lobbying activities. Yet, Frisco ISD spends less than \$5,000 per year on dues to TASB and other similar organizations, and the vast majority of those dues go toward services that have nothing to do with lobbying.

HB 749 would limit the District's ability to utilize the services provided by TASB and likely increase costs as the District would be required to spend resources beyond current dues levels to accomplish the services provided by TASB.