

HOW CHARTER EXPANSION WORKS IN TEXAS

Charter expansion in Texas is unlimited because once a charter is authorized and meets certain TEA requirements, the charter operator can apply to open any number of new campuses anywhere in Texas through an administrative process called a charter expansion amendment. The approval of an amendment is at the sole discretion of the TEA Commissioner of Education which is an appointed, not an elected, position.

In addition, the charter amendment process has almost zero public accountability or visibility. There is very limited public notice and no venue for public input. The only way to know what amendments have been filed with TEA is to submit a public information request to the agency. As a result, communities may only know that a new charter campus has been approved to operate in their neighborhood when the school opens.

Charter chains have taken advantage of this process by expanding rapidly without any public input. For example, while IDEA Public Schools holds one charter with the state, it currently has 75 campuses across Texas – mostly awarded through the amendment process with no public notice or input. In 2020, IDEA has applied to open and **additional 27**campuses across the state.

As one parent stated recently about the proposal to open an IDEA campus one mile or less from two existing schools in her district, “how can Texas approve a new charter campus in my community that we didn’t ask for and don’t need?”