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Senator Campbell Files Two Bills to Expand Access to School Choice
SB 1905 Creates Tuition Equalization Grants, 1906 Provides Scholarship Funds

AUSTIN – With less than 48 hours until the bill filing deadline, State Senator Donna Campbell filed two significant bills on Thursday to expand school choice in Texas.

Senate Bill 1905 is modeled after the popular Tuition Equalization Grant Program (TEG) for higher education and creates Tuition Equalization for Excellence (TEX) Grants for eligible students in grades K through 12. Senate Bill 1906 provides a tax credit for businesses that donate private scholarships to underprivileged children to attend the school of their choice.

"Right now we have school choice in Texas for those rich enough and those who are mobile enough. Unfortunately, those without the means are being left behind and forced to attend low performing schools based on their zip code," Senator Campbell said. "This inequity is unacceptable, and why I filed these bills. School choice is the civil rights issue of our time."

Both of Campbell's bills focus on students who have traditionally lacked access to quality education options, limiting eligibility to students with disabilities or from households at or below 250% of the federal poverty level, or around \$60,000 for a family of four.

Much of the language in SB 1906 passed the Texas Senate as part of SB 4 in 2015. However, that bill did not receive a vote in the House. The language of SB 1905 takes a newer approach, creating a tuition equalization program similar to what is offered to Texas college students while allowing local school boards to choose whether to participate. Parents in a school district could also petition their school board for an election to opt-in to the TEX Grant program.

A TEX Grant under SB 1905 would be worth roughly \$5800 and apply to the tuition of an accredited private or parochial school chosen by the participating family. In addition, a school district that opts-in would receive almost \$2000 for every child who accepts the grant. Meanwhile, the state would realize savings of up to \$3600 for every year a child participates. If those dollars are invested back into public education, it could even increase per-pupil funding across the state.

"Adding quality options multiplies success for our children," Senator Campbell stated. "These bills provide innovative ways to improve outcomes for many families who have not traditionally had the opportunity to send their child to the best schools. It levels the playing field while empowering local decision-making. That's a win-win for Texas school districts and students."

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State Senator Donna Campbell is an emergency room physician from New Braunfels who chairs the Veteran Affairs and Border Security Committee and sits on Finance and Education.