**QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:**
CLEAR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION IN SAN MARCOS
September 5, 2020

**Overview: CLEAR Public Charter School**, has submitted a charter application to TEA to open a new charter school in San Marcos CISD (Hays County), with two campuses serving grades K-8 and enrollment of 896 students at capacity.
 **Revenue loss for public school districts:** At a minimum, the San Marcos CISD (and affected districts Lockhart, Luling, and Prairie Lea) will lose an estimate of up to **$8.1 million** in revenue annually once CLEAR is at maximum enrollment capacity. Over ten years, San Marcos CISD and affected districts would lose an estimate of up to **$62.5 million** in revenue (*based on average estimated per student revenue loss*).
 **Fiscal cost to the state:** Because the charter funding advantage gives charter schools a $1,524 per student higher funding entitlement than San Marcos CISD, CLEAR will cost the state an additional **$3,372,551**in its first five years and **$9,722,146** in its first ten years over the cost of enrollment of the same students in San Marcos CISD.

**QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

**CLEAR’s “innovative” education program is already available to students in San Marcos CISD.** CLEAR proposes implementing an “innovative” instructional program that includes personalized learning and states that this model is not currently an option in San Marcos CISD. However, San Marcos CISD has already created an extensive personalized learning program at selected campuses with a thoughtful and detailed plan to expand the program to additional campuses in collaboration with expert consults and the support of a local foundation.

**Social emotional learning is already available in San Marcos CISD**. In addition, CLEAR proposes a social emotional learning program for students as an “innovative” program. Again, San Marcos CISD provides extensive and well-developed Social Emotional Learning district-wide that is aligned PreK – 12. It is coordinated by the Director of SEL and Counseling and includes four SEL counselors in addition to regular campus counselors.

**Concerns about limited financial support for CLEAR.** TEA staff expressed concern about the limited financial guarantees for CLEAR during its start-up year. In the TEA interview, CLEAR stated that a foundation grant was pending but did not provide detail or a timeline for possible approval.

**Limited experience implementing the proposed model.** The CLEAR founders propose an ambitious educational plan. But as the principal and assistant principal of an elementary school, it appears that they have limited experience actually implementing these “innovative” programs at a system-wide level from planning stage, to start-up, to expansion, and assessment. They have conducted research and observed programs at other districts and charter schools.

**CLEAR did not request a meeting with San Marcos CISD.** Although CLEAR was co-located in the same commercial building as San Marcos CISD in their first planning year, the CLEAR team did not request a meeting with San Marcos CISD leadership to discuss their proposed charter or to learn more about the educational programs already available to students in San Marcos CISD.

**CLEAR’s student enrollment projections will underserve at-risk students**. CLEAR’s enrollment projections for at-risk students are well-below some of the campuses they propose to serve. While CLEAR projects 55 percent of its students will be “at risk,” some existing targeted campuses currently serve between 67 percent to 89 percent at-risk.

**CLEAR student enrollment projections will underserve English Learners**. CLEAR proposes to serve 12 percent English Learners, while at least one existing targeted campus serves 69 percent English Learners.
In addition, CLEAR is planning to meet English Learners' needs with ESL. ESL is intended to support the transition to English as quickly as possible and does not include support for building fluency in the home language. San Marcos CISD promotes fluency in both Spanish and English to develop true bilingualism, and offers families school choice with 4 Dual Language campuses and 3 ESL; in addition, transportation is provided to English Learners to ensure access to Dual Language.

**CLEAR will not offer transportation.** CLEAR does not have plans to offer transportation. This limits access to students who are economically disadvantaged and rely on school transportation the most.

Link to the application: <http://castro.tea.state.tx.us/charter_apps/content/downloads/Nocdn/25-7.pdf>