Testimony of Dr. Ann Smisko  
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Before the House Public Education Committee  
The Honorable Dan Huberty, Chair  

April 4, 2017  

Key Points  

House Bill 3439 (Koop)  
Position: Support  

By incentivizing collaboration between school districts and charter schools, House Bill 3439 will encourage innovation as well as the efficient use of resources.  

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Ann Smisko, and I serve as Deputy Director of Policy and Programs at Raise Your Hand Texas. I appear before you today on behalf of Raise Your Hand to register our support for HB 3439.  

Open-enrollment charters began operating in Texas in 1995, and have grown significantly since that time so that they now educate roughly 250,000 public school students. Districts and charter operators, as well as members of the legislature, have expressed a desire for greater collaboration between these two sectors of our public education system to deliver innovation to students, families and educators, and to enhance efficiency. HB 3439 advances this goal by providing incentives for collaboration that benefit both parties.  

For districts, these partnerships allow access the maintenance and operations funding level of charters, which according to the fiscal note is on average $774 higher than that of their ISD counterparts, thereby providing a financial incentive for collaboration. In doing so, the bill also provides districts with yet another path to deliver high-quality accountable public school choice for students and families. For charters, the bill allows another path for growth as well as access to facilities, sharing of staff and other education resources.  

We understand that the committee substitute will allow ISDs to contract not only with existing open-enrollment charters but also with other non-profit organizations. We believe this amendment will encourage increased community engagement in campuses, particularly low-
performing campuses in need of additional resources, by encouraging the creation of new structures with the resources needed for the challenging work of school improvement.

**Conclusion**

We thank Representative Koop for bringing forward this thoughtful approach to encouraging collaboration between district and charter schools to the benefit of Texas students and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.