Testimony of Dr. Ann Smisko
Deputy Director of Policy and Programs
Raise Your Hand Texas

Before the House Committee on Public Education
The Honorable Dan Huberty, Chair

May 2, 2017

Key Points

HB 4170 (Cosper)
Position: Oppose

HB 4170 is a virtual voucher that would expand full-time virtual education in Texas, including expansion to untested grades (K-3), while entitling full-time virtual providers to receive federal, state and local funding equivalent to what the district would have received. Such an outcome is not warranted by the dismal performance of full-time virtual education programs both in Texas and nationally.

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 concerns regarding HB 4170 and respectfully testify in OPPOSITION to the bill.

Our testimony today on HB 4170 is short and to the point. HB 4170 is a virtual voucher that would expand full-time virtual education in Texas, including expansion to untested grades (K-3) which lack public accountability, while entitling full-time virtual providers to receive federal, state and local funding equivalent to what the district would have received. Such an outcome is not warranted by the dismal performance of full-time virtual education programs both in Texas and nationally.

Attached to my testimony is a report that I have previously shared with this committee summarizing the poor performance of full-time virtual programs in Texas. This alone provides sufficient reason to oppose the radical and unwarranted expansion of full-time virtual education proposed by HB 4170.
Conclusion

We respectfully register our opposition to HB 4170 and request that the committee not advance this measure to the full House of Representatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.