

December 17, 2020

Commissioner Mike Morath  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78701

The Honorable  
Dr. Keven Ellis  
Chair of the State Board of Education  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath and Dr. Ellis:

My name is Ray Tijerina, cofounder of Verdant EDU, an education support company based in San Antonio, Texas. I am writing to you today in support of 7C's Academy. Born and raised on the Southside of San Antonio, I experienced firsthand the difficulty of not being as well prepared as my peers while attending Sul Ross State University. This was not because my teachers or leaders failed, but because I required a different approach, something my family could not provide with one H-E-B warehouse salary. And that is what 7C's Academy will bring to the students of San Antonio, a different approach.

Creating a system that offers educational options for San Antonio families is important to me. As I still reside in San Antonio with my own children in the public school system, I have a deep understanding and appreciation of the educational needs and complexities of our diverse San Antonio communities. San Antonio's well-documented history of socioeconomic segregation created a system where children of color, like me, do not have the same opportunities that their white counterparts on the Northside have. The only way to disrupt this system is to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. While our local Independent School Districts are doing an admiral job, thus far, their efforts have not filled the gap.

This is where 7C's Academy would fit in. Dr. Balasubramanian's model will prove to be a gift to the brilliant minds of the Southside community. San Antonio's educational ecosystem is something to be in awe of. From our ISD's to our charter schools, the landscape is quickly turning into a model of what education reform should look like throughout the country. Families now have options and the more high quality schools we can provide, the more high quality educational opportunities students will have.

I recommend 7Cs Academy without reservation and truly believe that authorizing this school will provide San Antonio students and their families another pivotal high-quality educational opportunity.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at **(210) 929-9248** or **ray@verdantedu.org**.

Sincerely,

Ray Tijerina  
CoFounder, Verdant EDU