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**RQ-0625-KP**



# KELLY HANCOCK

STATE OF TEXAS · ACTING COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

December 12, 2025

The Honorable Ken Paxton  
Attorney General  
State of Texas  
209 West 14th Street, 8th Floor  
Austin, Texas 78701-1614

Dear Attorney General Paxton:

As Acting Comptroller of Public Accounts, I am requesting an expedited Attorney General Opinion concerning the eligibility of certain private schools to participate in the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program.

Recent findings have raised significant legal and taxpayer protection concerns. First, potential TEFA applicants accredited through the TEPSAC-approved agency Cognia are based at an address that have hosted publicly advertised events organized by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). On November 18, 2025, Governor Greg Abbott formally designated CAIR as both a “foreign terrorist organization” and a “transnational criminal organization.”

Second, it has been brought to my attention that another Cognia-accredited school may be owned or controlled by a holding group linked to foreign adversaries seeking influence over U.S. education, specifically, an adviser to the Chinese communist government. These circumstances appear to implicate newly enacted laws restricting property ownership, control, and financial influence by foreign adversary entities in Texas.

Given these developments, the Comptroller’s office requires legal clarity on the following question:

Whether a private school otherwise eligible for TEFA participation — including one accredited by a TEPSAC-approved agency such as Cognia — is legally disqualified from participating in TEFA if the school has:

- any known direct or indirect affiliation, shared facility use, partnership, or organized association with an entity designated as an FTO or TCO under Texas law; and/or
- ownership, governance, property interests, operational control, or financial influence traceable to individuals or entities associated with a foreign adversary as defined under Texas property-security and foreign-influence statutes.

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We are concerned these schools might be disqualified from TEFA participation under the “other relevant laws” provision of Section 29.358 of Senate Bill 2 (“Preapproved Providers and Vendors”) unless and until compliance can be verified and any legal concerns fully resolved. Because these determinations carry substantial statewide implications, a formal Attorney General Opinion is necessary to ensure uniform compliance and legal certainty.

The people of Texas deserve the highest assurance that no taxpayer dollars will be used, directly or indirectly, to support institutions with ties to a foreign terrorist organization, a transnational criminal network, or any adversarial foreign government. As the administrator of TEFA, my office is committed to upholding that responsibility while keeping the program timeline firmly on track so families maintain access to the educational opportunities the Legislature intended for the 2026-2027 school year.

We stand ready to provide any supporting documentation or further detail your office may require.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Hancock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kelly" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hancock".

Kelly Hancock  
Acting Comptroller  
State of Texas

