



**TEXAS STATE DIRECTOR
DEMOCRATS FOR EDUCATION REFORM**

THE SEARCH

Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), a leading national political organization, seeks an innovative and passionate public education advocate to serve as its inaugural Texas State Director (State Director). The State Director will launch and lead the DFER chapter in Texas, supporting elected Democrats and candidates for office who will expand policies and practices that work well for students, while also confronting those that do not. In keeping with DFER's core values, the State Director will be an education progressive who prioritizes students and families, particularly low-income students and students of color who should be better served by Texas' public education system. The State Director will embrace and advance DFER's foundational mission: *to create a public education system that empowers all students to reach their limitless potential.*

As DFER prepares to expand into the Lone Star State, the State Director will launch the chapter at a time of tremendous potential in Texas. The successful candidate will possess the drive and dexterity to leverage this unique moment of optimism and opportunity around education reform in Texas, with the ability to harness partners, resources, and knowledge in service of DFER's agenda.

The State Director will have the gravitas and credibility to serve as a leader in the state's education ecosystem, possessing the skills needed to develop and advocate for robust policy proposals; design and implement successful non-profit and political fundraising efforts; craft and execute political campaigns to support aligned candidates and initiatives; shape and sustain a diverse network of local allies and partners; connect broadly and build effective coalitions; and execute comprehensive communications plans.

DFER has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Texas State Director. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

DEMOCRATS FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Democrats for Education Reform was founded in 2007 by a group of activists and social entrepreneurs to address the persistent and growing opportunity gap in America's public schools, as well as the social, cultural, and economic crises that education inequality perpetuates. DFER is organized nationally into nine chapters: Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, D.C., and Washington state.

While state chapters provide the "on the ground" infrastructure to plan and execute tailored strategies and channel resources nimbly and effectively to build durable machines capable of achieving influence within their contexts, the national office reinforces and accelerates the work being done in states. The national office also impacts policy, politics, and communications, creating a more favorable national platform to support state and local activity. Through their joint efforts, the state chapters and national team build the DFER brand, lead a movement reaching across the country, and mobilize funds from a robust national donor base.

At its core, DFER works to ensure that the Democratic Party pursues education policies that enable all students, particularly students from low-income families and students of color, to obtain a globally competitive education. To achieve this aim, DFER builds a network of Democratic champions, allies, and supporters across the political and policymaking arenas to expand what works and change what is broken in the public education system, with the interests of students and families at the center.

Believing that optimizing educational outcomes requires an approach that integrates nonpartisan research and advocacy with political and electoral advocacy, DFER partners with a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) entity, Education Reform Now, and a 501(c)(4) political advocacy organization, Education Reform Now Advocacy, to advance its mission of promoting educational equity. More specifically:

- **Education Reform Now (ERN)** is a nonpartisan think tank that promotes increased resources and innovative reforms in K-16 public education, particularly for students of color and students from low-income families.
- **Education Reform Now Advocacy (ERNA)** is an advocacy group that advances education reform measures through empowering community leaders to support DFER's legislative and political advocacy work. ERNA keeps constant pressure on elected officials to champion high-quality public education.

The Texas State Director will be the state leader for both organizations. In Texas, DFER's work will take several forms:

- **Supporting Progressive Education Leaders:** DFER TX will engage directly with candidates and

elected officials to empower them to advocate for education policies that focus foremost on serving students. The work of DFER's partner organization, Education Reform Now, involves policy research, analysis, and education that helps policy makers at all levels understand complex education issues and make informed decisions. DFER's partner, Education Reform Now Advocacy, lobbies to advance education measures that close opportunity gaps and accelerate educational attainment for students, especially those who are historically underserved.

- **Informing the Education Debate in Texas:** DFER TX will participate in a broad array of coalitions targeting overall equity and fighting for higher achievement and greater opportunities for all students in the state.
- **Targeted Interventions and Rapid Response:** DFER's breadth and depth of reach, from the most local district relationships to state and federal policymakers, enable the organization to respond quickly to the changing landscape and policy trends. Activities will vary significantly from project to project and may include policy analysis, public engagement, electoral and issue advocacy, and policy guidance for elected officials and local advocates.

More information on Democrats for Education Reform can be found at <http://dfer.org>.

ROLE OF THE TEXAS STATE DIRECTOR

The State Director is responsible for advancing DFER's mission in Texas, a high-visibility platform for collaboration at the local, state, and federal levels of government. With broad authority to direct DFER Texas strategy and its portfolio of work, the State Director reports to the Chief of Staff and State Operations, a member of DFER's national team. The State Director will maintain close connections with the DFER national office, working in ongoing consultation with the Chief of Staff and State Operations to set and achieve strategic goals. With access to political, policy, communications, development, human resources and back-office support from the DFER national office, the State Director will also participate in relevant activities and opportunities that are driven at the national level, such as communications work, coalition convenings, and mentorship opportunities.

With direct budget oversight, the State Director will manage a small team, as well as lobbying and other strategic consultants. The State Director will have the opportunity to build their own staff, with hiring and human resources support from the DFER national office.

Specific responsibilities of the State Director will include:

- Serving as an active champion for the DFER agenda in Texas

- Partnering with and supporting elected officials who share DFER’s vision to prioritize a student-centered policy agenda that is rooted in educational equity and excellence
- Cultivating and securing new donor champions
- Recruiting, training, and supporting prospective candidates who will champion DFER’s educational equity agenda once in office
- Building and sustaining a network of coalition partners
- Partnering with school leaders, parents, community members, and other key stakeholders to advocate on behalf of critical policy priorities
- Tracking policy, legislation, and news for DFER’s emerging base of supporters in Texas, ensuring that they have consistent access to synthesized information

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The inaugural Texas State Director will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Create a roadmap for education reform advocacy in the current Texas context

In Texas, a state with an electorate that is growing and diverse; a legislature that is shifting in terms of its composition; and an expanding pool of strong Democratic candidates running for office, the State Director will chart a strategic roadmap for progress on key education policy priorities. The State Director will work toward balancing the conversation around crucial education reform efforts, with a commitment to representing the interests of Texas children and families who have traditionally been excluded from consideration by the state’s Republican majority.

Build broad awareness of DFER Texas’ priorities and identity

The inaugural Texas State Director will lead efforts to build the DFER brand in the state, forging clear connections between the organization’s mission and values rooted in educational equity for all Texas students. The State Director will be an effective representative for DFER’s policy priorities within the public sphere, building – and eventually broadening – public awareness of the organization’s interests in the state.

Position DFER Texas as an influential stakeholder for elected officials and candidates seeking election

The State Director will play a critical strategic role in building relationships with current elected officials who share DFER’s values and priorities, identifying and recruiting candidates for elected office who will champion DFER Texas initiatives and policies, and deploying strategies and resources to ensure successful election results. The State Director will establish and maintain effective relationships and alliances with elected and appointed officials at the state and local levels. As a result of the State Director’s leadership, DFER Texas will build a reputation as a key player within the state Democratic Party, as well as within the state’s broader electoral and governing landscape.

Build a broad coalition of partners aligned with DFER’s policy priorities

The State Director will galvanize education groups while engaging other civically minded organizations to help advance progressive education reform measures on behalf of families and students. The State Director will be an adept relationship manager, with the foresight and aptitude to build and maintain connections with key partners in service of advancing critical DFER priorities. In creating a coalition of partners, the State Director will be proactive in prioritizing underrepresented voices and those less often heard.

Communicate effectively and persuasively with diverse constituents

The State Director will serve as a visible spokesperson for the DFER Texas agenda, possessing the reach to resonate with diverse constituency groups that include students and families, elected officials and candidates for office, and advocates and allies, among others. The State Director will be a clear and compelling communicator, with the ability to articulate – via various avenues – the promise and impact of key reform efforts. The State Director will maintain relationships with the media, identifying opportunities to prioritize educational equity while promoting DFER Texas’ policy expertise and unique value proposition within the public sphere.

Steward and secure financial resources

The State Director will tap into Texas’ existing network of reform- and equity-minded philanthropists and donors, cultivating relationships with anchor funding partners and positioning the organization for long-term sustainability and success. The State Director will be the primary liaison with the chapter’s donors, taking care to steward funding partners.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

While no one individual will possess all desired qualifications, the ideal candidate will bring a majority of the following professional experiences and personal characteristics to bear in the role of Texas State Director:

- A commitment to policy reforms that will improve educational opportunities for all students, particularly students of color and low-income students; an ability to operate with a strong racial and social justice lens
- A concrete understanding of the Texas political landscape or the ability to quickly gain knowledge in the space; existing relationships within state and local political and education systems are preferred
- Leadership and management experience within the non-profit education and political campaign and advocacy sectors; a record of achieving ambitious results in these roles
- A concrete track record of setting and achieving big goals despite challenges; ability to drive toward progress with creativity and relentless determination

- Political savvy coupled with an inherent motivation to affect change in the political and advocacy spheres, as well as an interest in politics and advocacy on the state, local, and national levels
- A demonstrated track record of raising funds in a non-profit and/or political context
- An entrepreneurial spirit; an enthusiastic embrace of the opportunity to launch, and grow, a new statewide organization
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills
- The ability to think strategically and know-how to discern key levers for change and progress
- A sense of humor and humility; comfort with complexity
- In word and in deed, a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Candidate location (within Texas) is flexible.

TO APPLY

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent electronically, in confidence, to:

Pam Pezzoli, Partner
Janette Martinez, Associate
Courtney Cabansag, Associate
Melissa Barravecchio, Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller
www.imsearch.com/8760

Democrats for Education Reform welcomes applications from all, and strongly encourages women, people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and LGBTQ people to apply for this position. We are committed to maximizing the diversity of our organization and recruiting a team that reflects the diversity of Texas' students.