



To: House Committee on Public Education
From: Tony Bennett, President & CEO, Texas Association of Manufacturers
Mike Meroney, education and workforce consultant for TAM
Date: September 30, 2020
Re: Committee request for information regarding interim charge #1[B]

The Texas Association of Manufacturers (TAM) represents over 600 manufacturing companies in Texas, including 70 of the state's largest industry employers. Manufacturing is a core element of the Texas economy, directly employing over 869,000 workers who earn an average compensation of more than \$82,500 annually. Moreover, a typical manufacturing job supports 3.8 additional jobs in our state, with some industry sectors, such as petrochemical - which uses Texas oil and gas - providing even higher related job multiples. Viewed in this manner, manufacturing accounts for about 30% of our state's overall employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the state's public school accountability system. The Texas Legislature must remove barriers for true "alignment" between public education, higher education and the diverse workforce needs of Texas employers. Not only do students deserve an efficient and effective path to success, but manufacturers must have educated and skilled employees to build, operate and maintain their facilities.

Manufacturers strongly support more industry-based certifications being taught in high school, but the IBC list available for "credit" in the K-12 public education accountability system is both flawed and woefully incomplete. The IBC list has arbitrary guardrails: 1) certifications must be completed while the student was still in high school for the ISD to receive credit; and 2) the decision to include an IBC has been the sole discretion of the Texas Education Agency staff - putting staff inexperienced with industry practices in a position to pick winners and losers. It's well known that ISD administrators and CTE directors will not approve coursework or curricula unless that particular certification is included on the TEA-approved IBC list.

Manufacturers support an overhaul in the evaluation and determination of the K-12 accountability IBC list. First, TEA should seek feedback from both the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Second, business and industry partners must provide meaningful input... the Texas Association of Manufacturers will be happy to connect agency staff with dozens of professionals from our member companies who recruit and hire employees as part of their daily work.

Many worthy IBCs simply cannot be completed before high school graduation. Often, these certification programs start in K-12 and are completed in post-secondary environments like Texas State Technical College, junior colleges, private technical schools, workforce training programs, and apprenticeship programs. School districts deserve credit for offering coursework in these certification areas because employers value them.

TAM supports a new and improved evaluation system of the IBC list... one that involves TEA, TWC, the THECB, and a healthy dose of direction from employers. The 600 members of the Texas Association of Manufacturers stands ready to assist in any way we can.