

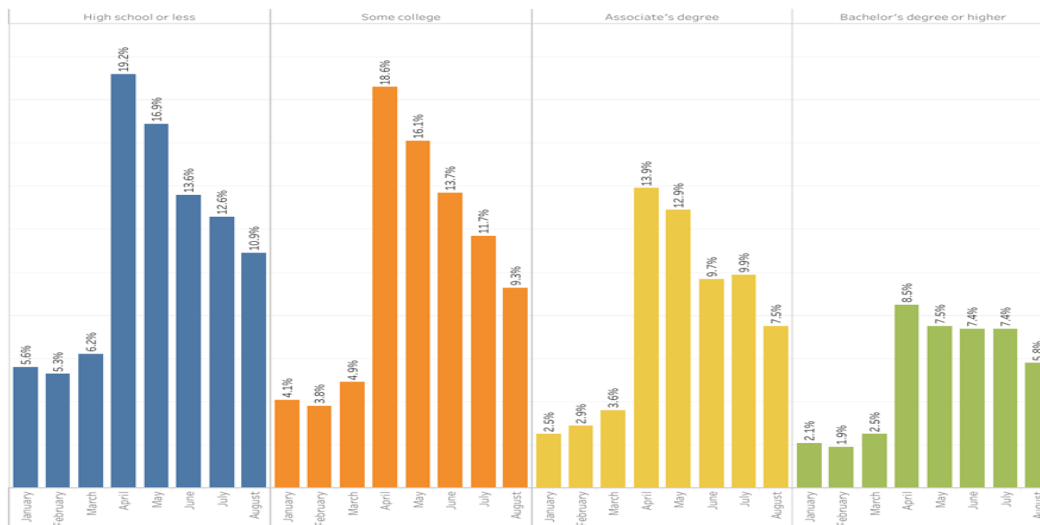


**Response to House Public Education Committee
Interim Charge #1
Wednesday, September 30, 2020
Submitted by Dana Harris, VP of Federal/State Advocacy
Austin Chamber of Commerce**

The Austin Chamber supports building an education, finance and policy culture that will help Texas remain economically competitive and achieve 60x30TX education and workforce goals. As Texas stands at roughly 13% unemployment with 1.9 million Texans out of work over the last 60 days, it is critical that policymakers focus on advancing state 60x30 goals to hone the talent we need to meet current and future labor market demand and keep our economy strong.

Texans without a postsecondary credential have been consistently more vulnerable to unemployment prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but even more so throughout the duration of the pandemic. Moreover, only 1 in 5 Texas eighth graders currently go on to complete an Associate's degree, a vocational certificate, or a bachelor's degree within six years of their high school graduation.

Share of Workers Unemployed by Education Level (Jan-August 2020)



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (Basic Monthly), 2020.

To keep the Texas economy strong, we must bolster postsecondary attainment and career preparation to ensure students/graduates have the education and skills training they need compete in our changing economy.

Passage of HB3, with its strong focus on college, career, military readiness, along with Gov. Abbott's call for Tri-Agency alignment between the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Education Agency are strong steps to help advance Texas education attainment and ensure more students are prepared to enter our workforce. However, HB3 cannot fulfill its promise if policymakers do not maintain their commitment to the resource and implement its provisions.

Accordingly, in response to interim charge 1, the Austin Chamber asks that you maintain the investments in education you committed to in House Bill 3 and avoid cuts or delays in funding that could impact programmatic or structural changes in provisions to implement:

- College, career, and military readiness (CCMR) outcomes bonus funding for districts who perform above state CCMR thresholds;
- Reimbursement to school districts to provide at least one SAT, ACT, TSIA and one industry certification prior to high school graduation;
- Added student finding weight for P-Tech and New Tech High Schools to support scaling and expansion of programs that yield associate degrees or industry certifications;
- Implementation of FAFSA graduation requirement to maximize state and federal aid to help families afford college;
- Expansion of funding for Career Technology Education (CTE) courses, including Computer Science courses and additional grant funding for school districts offering CTE courses over summer;
- Extended school year funding for school districts to add up to 30 instructional days above 180 days for the 2020-2021 school year;
- Differential compensation for experienced and effective teachers via increases to the Basic Allotment and the adopted Teacher Incentive Allotment;
- Full-Day Pre-K with high quality measures and Early Literacy and math proficiency plans with annual goals.
- Early Education Allotment for students on free or reduced lunch and English Language Learners and added weight for dual-language immersion.
- Continued relief for school districts impacted by recapture, to include continued property tax compression, eligibility for Transportation Allotment funding, and geographic variation study to determine education and resource costs by region to help inform future school finance provisions.

We believe the HB3 provisions above will help ensure our young people have the resources and preparation they need to succeed in today's, and tomorrow's, competitive economy. Our own partnership DTC70 (Direct-to-College) Partnership data compiled by the University of Texas Ray Marshall Center shows 66% of students who enroll in postsecondary education meeting current state college readiness standards and file a FAFSA complete their degree in 6 years, vs only 39% of those who do not meet state standards. Low-income students who complete a FAFSA, and graduate college ready, are also 3 times more likely to complete a degree than low-income students who do not.

For these reasons, we urge you to maintain your commitment to resource and implement the provisions you adopted in House Bill 3.

Thank you for your service and all you do to ensure Texans have the educational opportunities and skills needed to keep compete for good jobs and keep our economy strong. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.