HB 199

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: March 25, 2021 8:00 AM

Laura Marquez

Self - Social Work Profession

EL PASO, TX

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and Committee Members, for the opportunity to voice my EMPHATIC SUPPORT for HB 199 by Representative Lina Ortega. I am a life-long resident of El Paso County. I am asking for your support in bringing a public law school to El Paso County. El Paso is a resilient and strong community. When it comes to the challenge of being a medically and professionally underserved community, we have met those obstacles head on and our leaders have advocated to bring much needed—and homegrown—opportunity to our county. We need your help to continue the much-needed work of lifting this community to further greatness.

Not only do I want to see this law school established for the betterment of my community as a whole, but I have a very personal stake in this bill. As a first-generation college graduate, I was also what you would call a non-traditional college student. I returned to college at the age of 32 after a 10-year gap of working and raising a family. Over the course of 5 years, I completed both my Bachelor and Master of Social Work degrees---all while being a wife and mother of three children under 7. This would not have been possible if not for the fact the University of Texas at El Paso had an accredited social work program. My time in my program gave me many things, one of which was a passion for the law. I knew before I graduated with my master's degree that my next dream would be to go to law school. I know that whether I am 40 or 50, I WILL get my law degree. But that can only happen if this committee clears the way for HB 199. I love my community. My work in the non-profit sector is here, my children thrive in our excellent school district, my husband has a fulfilling job at UTEP. I cannot and will not leave my beloved community to go to the nearest law school hundreds of miles away. It's not possible for me and I know many others share my experience. I ask you to please help bring a public law school to our amazing community. Keep investing in us. We are worth it!