

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1624

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: April 29, 2021 8:00 AM

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Project Lead The Way

Dallas, TX

On behalf of Project Lead The Way (PLTW), I thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments in support of HB 1624 relating to a study on best practices in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs at minority-serving public institutions of higher education and to a grant program to implement those practices.

PLTW is a nonprofit organization that provides a transformative learning experience for PreK-12 students and teachers across the U.S. through more than 15,000 programs in approximately 12,000 schools. PLTW empowers students to develop and apply in-demand, transportable skills by exploring real-world challenges. Through our pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science, students not only learn technical skills, but also learn to solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate, and collaborate. We also provide teachers with the training, resources, and support they need to engage students in real-world learning. PLTW was proud to provide over 1,000 programs in more than 800 Texas schools during the 2019 – 2020 academic year.

The Pew Research Center recently released a study showing that Black and Hispanic adults are less likely to earn degrees in STEM than other degree fields, and they continue to make up a lower share of STEM graduates relative to their share of the adult population. The current trends are not enough to close the gaps in representation in STEM fields, specifically in computing and engineering. HB 1624 would allow Texas to determine best practices in STEM programs offered by minority-serving institutions of higher education specific to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of members of racial and ethnic minority groups in STEM.

In November 2020, Dow Chemical announced a commitment designed to address systemic racism and inequality in the areas of advocacy, community and talent. As a part of this multimillion-dollar commitment, Dow partnered with PLTW to provide grants to schools in support of the development of teachers and students at schools near their Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) partners.

Specific to Texas, schools located in Waller, Harris, Austin, Montgomery and Fort Bend counties are eligible for this support from Dow to implement PLTW programs to strengthen the STEM pipeline to Prairie View A&M University. Dow continues to champion inclusion, diversity, and equity; and through partnerships, they aim to expand opportunities and provide support to those pursuing STEM careers. This is one example of how this work is already being done in Texas with the potential to go to scale.

We thank Rep. Raymond for his leadership on this STEM pipeline bill, and we appreciate your leadership in the Texas Legislature to ensure all Texas students have access to high-quality education with the hope of creating economic mobility for all. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.