

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2030

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: April 8, 2021 8:00 AM

Justin Yancy

Texas Business Leadership Council

Austin, TX

Chairman Murphy and members of the committee,

My name is Justin Yancy, and I'm President of the Texas Business Leadership Council, testifying in favor of House Bill 2030.

Texas business leaders are dependent on our state's higher education system to develop young people who are ready to thrive in the workplace. We are especially dependent on our state's community colleges, which educate more Texans than any other sector of our higher education system.

That's why, like many others, the Texas Business Leadership Council is deeply concerned about last year's sudden drop in community college enrollment. Unlike in previous economic downturns, where interest in earning a credential increased, we are now dealing with a truly unprecedented convergence of high unemployment and low college-going rates. This is of special concern to TBLC because our businesses were already noting a struggle to recruit and retain qualified talent before the pandemic. A survey from our partners at the Dallas Regional Chamber found that half of businesses felt there was not enough skilled local talent to meet business needs. Over a quarter cited recruiting a capable workforce as a top business concern. Meanwhile, only one-in-four young adults in the region earn a living wage.

This is unsustainable for employers and employees alike. While the budget is clearly limited this session, a strategic investment in our workforce pipeline using federal funds could not only help our community colleges recover from the pandemic, but also address long-standing issues in workforce development.

This is exactly what HB 2030 does. By building on proven best practices from around the state, this bill provides a market-oriented solution for educators and employers alike. The competitive regional grants created are modeled after successful programs in Dallas, Bexar and Harris Counties, where many participating high schools actually saw an increase in college enrollment in spite of the statewide decline. HB 2030 incentivizes local partnerships between K-12, community colleges and universities by providing results-based funding for collaboratives that successfully help eligible students enroll, persist, and complete a postsecondary education.

These grants provide resources to support students with wraparound services and workforce-aligned education opportunities. They reward systems that not only enroll, but graduate students. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that every high school graduate who goes on to complete a postsecondary credential increases their lifetime earnings by up to \$1 million. But first, they have to cross that finish line.

Regional collaboratives across the state have begun to identify the strategies that will achieve this goal. Now they need the state's help in order to implement and scale.

The Texas Business Leadership Council respectfully urges you to provide that support.

Kelly Hall, CEO

Longview Chamber of Commerce

Longview, TX

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On behalf of the Longview Chamber of Commerce, representing over 50,000 employees in the Gregg County trade area, we are asking for your support for HB 2030 by Chris Turner. Our organization supports the incentivization of local partnerships between K-12, community colleges and universities by providing results-based funding for collaboratives with aligned strategies that successfully help eligible students who enroll, persist, and complete a postsecondary education. It is important that this funding be utilized on student support strategies like effective case management systems and increased advisors and support staff to help bridge the critical gap between high school and college.

This bill is a wise investment of federal funds as Texas responds to the pandemic's significant impact on college enrollment, which – if unaddressed – will likely affect our economy for decades to come, as Texas will lack the highly skilled talent it demands. Please support HB 2030 and ensure our state recovers even stronger.

Thank you.

Aaron Langford, Lt Paramedic

Buda Fire Department

Georgetown, TX

"I support this bill because COVID-19 and the ice storms have shown us that we need Paramedics to have access to education to become the next EMS leaders."

George Tennison

Self

Marble Falls, TX

I'm in support of post secondary education in Texas as it pertains to first responder education for paramedics specifically. This subject is important to me as my daughter is a paramedic first responder in Texas.

Jeanette Tennison

Self Administrative Assistance

Marble Falls, TX

I am in support of EMS to be included in free education for their service to the community.

Ryan Franklin, Sr. Director, Policy & Advocacy

Educate Texas at Communities Foundation of Texas

Austin, TX

Honorable Chair Murphy and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 2030 by Reps. Turner and Button. Educate Texas, an initiative of the Communities Foundation of Texas, convenes the Texas Student Success Council, a diverse group of leaders representing K-12, higher education, business, and philanthropy. The Council develops and advocates for evidence-based policies that promote postsecondary access, persistence, and completion so that all Texas students have the opportunity to succeed in school, the workforce, and life.

COVID-19 has led to setbacks in the pursuit of this mission and 60x30TX broadly. During other recent economic downturns, increases in unemployment have closely paralleled increases in college enrollment as workers look to reskill and re-enter the economy. Of the jobs created after 2008, more than 99% went to adults with some postsecondary education.

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In 2020, however, the increase in unemployment due to the pandemic was followed by a substantial decrease in postsecondary enrollment, particularly within historically underserved communities. Persisting lower enrollments, combined with learning loss and shifts in pandemic business practices, have left many workers permanently displaced. Economic recovery from this crisis and the state's long-term financial future will require investments in the workforce pipeline with supports targeted at connecting and reconnecting students to postsecondary pathways and, ultimately, credits and credentials of workforce value.

HB 2030 creates an investment in the state workforce through supporting postsecondary regional collaboratives. These collaboratives join efforts across K-12, higher education, and community partners to promote college enrollment and completion, especially among students from communities with lower incomes and credential attainment. Through this bill, the state would be able to bolster long-term economic growth by immediately supporting collaboratives that make progress on boosting postsecondary enrollments. Once the students are enrolled, this bill would provide resources to help with persistence such as wraparound services, additional financial aid, and work-based learning opportunities.

HB 2030 would give regional collaboratives the resources necessary to offer thoughtful, localized supports targeted to the communities they serve. Increasing postsecondary completion rates, particularly among underserved communities, would help the state achieve 60x30TX goals while leading to significant financial returns through increased earnings and a more robust state workforce.

We appreciate the committee's consideration of this legislation and are glad to serve as a resource if there are any questions.

Contact Information: Ryan Franklin, Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at Educate Texas, rfranklin@cftexas.org