

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3348

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Hearing Date: April 1, 2021 8:00 AM

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Neil Matkin, Dr.

Collin College

McKinney, TX

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As district president of Collin College, which serves more than 58,000 students annually throughout Collin and Rockwall counties and surrounding communities, I am writing to express my strong support for H.B. 3348. If passed, this bill would permit Collin College to further increase educational attainment and opportunity in our region.

In 2017 the Texas Legislature approved S.B. 2117 which, for the first time, gave community colleges the necessary support to develop up to three baccalaureate degrees within a targeted area of focus, namely, in nursing, applied technology, and applied science. Collin College, with the support of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, our accrediting agencies, and the enthusiastic backing of our community has moved forward aggressively to implement those degrees.

Collin College, which enjoys the distinction of being the only Texas community college recognized by the National League of Nursing as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education, celebrated our first nursing graduates with a baccalaureate degree last December. Our baccalaureate of applied technology in cybersecurity is under way and enjoys competitive enrollment; our first graduates will be awarded their degrees in the spring of 2022. Beginning next year, assuming all appropriate approvals are received, we plan to initiate a baccalaureate in applied science in the field of construction management.

Each of these degrees were established with strong community involvement and support and provide educational opportunities in our area unavailable elsewhere. We are attracting students to these programs who likely would never receive a bachelor's degree, partly due to cost. As the lowest in-district tuition community college provider in the state, Collin College graduates can complete their baccalaureate for less than \$8,000 in tuition and fees. Thanks to the tireless work of our foundation and the availability of financial support, it is possible and highly likely that many graduates complete the program with little or no student debt.

Providing two additional baccalaureate opportunities for community colleges will enable Collin College to further expand our portfolio of degrees in such fields as information technology, cloud computing, law enforcement or other areas to be determined. As we have previously, Collin College will work with our neighboring universities, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, major employers in our region, and other critical partners to ensure the programs we develop meet immediate workforce needs in high-demand areas. We are proud of serving students predominantly in the two-year space but are pleased to be bringing four-year opportunities where needed, particularly to underserved students.

I am deeply grateful to this committee for your consideration of this important legislation and am available to answer any questions you may have.