

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Higher Education
For HB 8

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Hearing Date: March 20, 2023 10:00 AM

Patrick Gilbert, Dr.

Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA)
Austin, TX

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I have the pleasure of serving as President of the Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA). On behalf of the Association, I write in support of HB 8. We very much appreciate the legislative focus on community colleges, and the commitment to strong funding of both our core mission and state higher education initiatives currently taking place at our institutions. We are fully committed to a broad mission of educating our students, providing a safe, inclusive learning environment, and preparing them for the futures of their choice, whether in our fellow institutions for further study, in the Texas workforce, or in places and spaces we, and they, might have hardly imagined. Increases to funding contemplated in concert with this bill are an excellent investment in our state, our institutions, and the individual Texans who will benefit from it.

TCCTA is continually working to improve faculty performance and student outcomes through our network of strong faculty leaders, our many workshops on a variety of topics including specific course content, best practices in pedagogy, and new issues in our academic disciplines. We develop our current leaders with a variety of resources, including our Leading from the Middle annual event, and develop future leaders through our Faculty Fellows program. We recently held our 76th Annual Convention which convened hundreds of faculty members from across the state to share our best ideas and look toward the future. Of course, the door is always open for each of you to join us for any of our programming.

As we support HB 8, we are well aware of the upcoming work that the bill signals. HB 8 leaves much discretionary power to the legislature in resourcing our funding tiers with future appropriations, and much authority to the Commissioner of Higher Education to determine key questions raised by the performance tier in the bill concerning what might constitute “credentials of value.” We know our faculty have been working on issues such as these for decades, and have earned a seat at the table as we commence the implementation of HB 8 in partnership with our institutions, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the legislature. As faculty, we live the realities of any higher education legislation passed and remain ready and willing to work with the legislature and the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Thank you for your time, and I support the passage of HB 8.

Sincerely,

-Patrick Gilbert

President, Texas Community College Teachers Association

Ashley Slania, Head of U.S. Government Relations

LyondellBasell

Houston, TX

Written testimony on behalf of LyondellBasell provided directly to Higher Education Committee.

John Fitzpatrick

Educate Texas

Austin, TX

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for House Bill 8 (HB 8) by Representative VanDeaver. Educate Texas, an educational initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, works to advance our vision that all Texas students, especially African American, Latino, and economically disadvantaged students, earn a college degree or credential that leads to a living wage and thriving communities. We were pleased to work closely with other advocates and the Texas Association of Community Colleges to support the work of the Texas Commission on Community College Finance throughout the interim and are excited to support HB 8, which is a generational opportunity to expand economic opportunities for the current and future workforce of Texas. By providing affordable dual credit for more students, prioritizing funding for outcomes, and recognizing the additional supports needed for today's students, HB 8 is poised to serve as a national model for how to fund community colleges.

Currently, an economically disadvantaged student's access to affordable academic or workforce dual credit courses depends on where that student lives, leading to sizeable gaps between dual credit earned based on socioeconomic status and between rural and urban or suburban students. By providing targeted financial aid for dual credit courses for economically disadvantaged students, more Texans can access valuable workforce or academic coursework while still in high school putting them on track for a credential of value.

The current "success points" funding model provides limited resources or predictable funding for community colleges to change practices. They may improve their outcomes yet still lose out on access to these funds because of the allocation-based funding. By creating a dynamic funding model that prioritizes credentials of value, HB 8 provides a structure that can foster planning and support in meeting the needs of students and employers. Although the public education funding model in Texas has long recognized that different students required different levels of support, the community college funding model funds recognizes no differences between students from economically or academically disadvantaged backgrounds or between traditional students and those who are returning as adult learners. HB 8 would remedy this by recognizing the additional costs and targeted supports necessary for helping all students reach their goals for a credential of value.

HB 8 provides an opportunity for the state to make a historic investment in our community colleges to support students in earning a postsecondary credential – whether it be an academic or workforce credential – that equips those students for meaningful workforce opportunities and economic mobility.

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

Becky Calahan
Philanthropy Advocates
Austin, TX

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for House Bill 8 (HB 8) by Representative VanDeaver. Philanthropy Advocates, a collaboration with Educate Texas, is a funders collaborative of over 55 Texas foundations. Members of Philanthropy Advocates are funders in communities across Texas – in rural, urban and suburban regions where we are deeply invested in our education systems. Together we advocate for public and higher education policies so that all Texas students can achieve their educational goals from cradle to career.

By 2030, over 60% of all Texas jobs will require some kind of postsecondary credential, but only 48% of adults in Texas today have a postsecondary credential. Our long-term competitiveness as a state will depend on our ability to attract and retain high quality jobs that require more Texans to earn credentials beyond high school at a faster pace. Through Building a Talent Strong Texas, the state has defined an ambitious goal of ensuring that at least 60% of Texans will have earned a postsecondary credential that equips students for meaningful workforce opportunities and economic mobility by 2030.

Philanthropy Advocates knows Texas cannot reach the ambitious goals established by the state without education systems – cradle to career – that equip students for lifelong academic and career success. Specifically, we believe Texas cannot maintain global competitiveness or advance economic mobility for Texas families if the Legislature does not advance HB 8 this legislative session.

HB 8 will increase economic mobility for families by increasing affordable postsecondary options as early as high school through its efforts to enhance dual credit options. It will also invest in re-skilling and up-skilling efforts that are often necessary for mid-career professionals to advance and increase their household earnings potential.

HB 8 will support community colleges in prioritizing programs that meet their local workforce needs so that students will be competitive candidates for high-wage, high-demand jobs. Texas businesses will have access to a skilled workforce better aligned to their needs.

We believe advancing education is investing in economic success for Texas families and for our state. In a voter survey conducted by Baselice & Associates, 94 percent of Texans agreed that an educated workforce is the key to the future economic success of Texas. Additionally, 93 percent of Texans agreed that community colleges should be properly funded so they can continue to offer the training needed for people to get a good job or a better job.

We believe the passage of HB 8 would be transformative for Texans. We appreciate the committee's consideration on this legislation and are glad to serve as a resource if there are any questions.

Christopher Lee
North Texas Regional Chamber Coalition
Irving, TX

To: The Honorable John Kuempel
Re: House Bill 8
Position: For

Chairman Kuempel and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

The North Texas Regional Chamber Coalition ("RCC") is a cooperative body of more than 100 chambers of commerce in our 13-county region. Fourteen of these chambers are active in daily advocacy functions. The North Texas Commission, a regional public-private partnership, manages the RCC and leads a unified effort to promote workforce readiness in economic competitiveness. Together, our 15 organizations represent the voices of nearly 12,000 businesses in our region.

Workforce supply is a top concern for the North Texas Region. The RCC supports efforts to increase workforce supply and resiliency by increasing funding for higher education institutions. The Commission on Community College Finance's recommendations meets the needs of community colleges and businesses throughout the state by providing funding for outcomes, affordability for students, and investing in educational capacity. House Bill 8 incorporates all of these priorities. We support the passage of House Bill 8 and encourage you to recommend this bill favorably to the full House.

The RCC is proud to lead the region's unified advocacy voice, and we appreciate your favorable consideration of House Bill 8.

Sincerely,

The North Texas Regional Chamber Coalition:
Allen Fairview Chamber of Commerce
Denton Chamber of Commerce
Flower Mound Chamber of Commerce
Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
Frisco Chamber of Commerce
Grapevine Chamber of Commerce
Greater Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Hurst Euless Bedford Chamber of Commerce
Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce
McKinney Chamber of Commerce
North Dallas Chamber of Commerce
North Texas Commission
Plano Chamber of Commerce
Richardson Chamber of Commerce

Christopher Lee
North Texas Commission
Irving, TX

To: The Honorable John Kuempel
Re: House Bill 8
Position: For

Chairman Kuempel and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

The North Texas Commission (NTC) is a public-private partnership representing stakeholders who advance the economic success of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Our members include midsize to large employers, cities, counties, and educational institutions throughout our 13-county region. North Texas is home to more than 150 municipalities that account for nearly 8 million Texans.

We are the fourth largest region in the United States, growing by one person every three minutes. North Texas is undoubtedly a popular place to live and conduct business. Our region alone is the 23rd largest economy in the world. North Texas community colleges serve almost one-fourth of all students enrolled in the state.

Workforce supply is a top concern for the North Texas Region. The NTC supports efforts to increase workforce supply and resiliency by increasing funding for higher education institutions. The Commission on Community College Finance's recommendations meets the needs of community colleges and businesses throughout the state by providing funding for outcomes, affordability for students, and investing in educational capacity. House Bill 8 incorporates all of these priorities. We support the passage of House Bill 8 and encourage you to recommend this bill favorably to the full House.

Sincerely,
Christopher Lee
Director of State Relations
North Texas Commission

Hector Valle Valle
Texas Border Coalition
Austin, TX

The Texas Border Coalition (TBC) supports HB 8, legislation that unlocks \$650 million in funding that our community colleges desperately need.

The TBC is a collective voice of border mayors, county judges, and economic development commissions focused on issues that affect 2.8 million people along the Texas-Mexico border region and economically disadvantaged counties from El Paso to Brownsville. TBC works to educate, advocate, and secure funding for transportation, immigration and border security, workforce development, community colleges, economic development, and health care.

We believe the 88th Texas Legislature should pass this legislation to develop a consistent base of funding for instruction and operations across community colleges. Specifically, we support a model that protects funding for small and rural-serving colleges with lower property values to ensure they have the resources needed to serve students inside and outside their service areas and to meet local employers' workforce requirements.

Our analysis is that HB 8 will provide community college districts with the resources needed to train, support, and offer credentials of value to students from all backgrounds so they can meet employers' needs today and tomorrow, helping colleges provide equitable opportunities for students.

HB 8 will help Texas maintain its success in the global competition for jobs and to become a national leader in addressing the changing needs of the workforce. HB 8 will encourage partnerships and shared services among colleges to help more students afford college, complete credentials of value, and transfer to four-year institutions.

We urge the Committee on Higher Education to pay special attention to features of the new funding model that will provide clear and fair incentives for rural-serving colleges and those with smaller property tax bases – including those on the border - to increase enrollment, develop new capacity to offer programs in high-cost or high-demand fields, and work collaboratively to meet regional and state workforce needs.

Drew Landry, Prof.

Self

Lubbock, TX

Without objection I would like my comments to go into the public record for opposition to the proposed changes in HB 8 on the grounds of Section 130A SubChapter C that details performance tier funding for public junior colleges.

The phrase "school choice" floats around this storied institution like oxygen but higher education is where such choice begins and ends. Students choose to attend a junior college or four year institution. What they do during that time is not entirely the responsibility of the school. Outcomes based - or as put in the bill "performance tier funding" - is a bad idea and should be stricken from the language or at the very least, tabled indefinitely in this committee.

What this inadvertently creates is a system where junior colleges game the system in order to get funding. They're calling will be to serve the Almighty Dollar instead of instilling knowledge. I understand the recommendation came from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and this committee wants to follow its recommendation, but did this committee ever consider the makeup of the THECB? How many of those who serve on it have a background in higher education? How many of them in education period? How many of the representatives on this committee have a background in higher education? Education period?

Were any studies conducted to find any potential positives or negatives on performance tier funding? I did not find any. If there, please point them to my direction.

How do we not know that this is an attempt to regulate higher education to the will of the governing majority? Does this committee want a great deal of graduated derelicts in Texas and America? If so, please continue down this path because grading scales will change, academic quality will be lowered, and faculty will be fired because of this. The hypothetical situation of students not passing required courses, therefore not reaching 15 credit hours or graduating, the college missed a chance at getting more state funding, and faculty not being renewed will turn into a reality under this plan.

Performance based solutions for education are bad. Those are quantity - business - driven measurements used for a quality based product. Educational achievement is not measured like that of McDonald's or Burger King. While the latter cares about quarterly profit - performance based driven, the former cares about children who learn in different ways. Why is the charge of the THECB and this committee to lower the standard of education to that of status of McDonald's and Burger King? I have never heard a good answer to that question and doubt that I will.

Finally, I would like to point out that this hearing was held when Spring Break ended. Was THECB or this committee afraid of holding a hearing convenient enough for those this affects? Why could this hearing not be held during Spring Break? The answer is quite obvious.

Thank you for your time and I hope the bill dies.

Katie Ferrier

San Antonio Chamber of Commerce

San Antonio, TX

The San Antonio Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 8 to ensure that our state's community colleges can fill skill gaps within our regional economies. Many organizations that testified in support of this bill listed the many reasons it will help our workforce development efforts. However, we can add a few more specific details. We were pleased to see scholarships and financing for dual credit coursework to help young people leave high school and be able to enter the state's workforce with necessary skills and no debt. We also believe that an outcomes-based funding approach will help strengthen the very necessary collaborative partnerships of employers and education institutions, and we encourage you to help emphasize the need for innovation and responsiveness in program development.