

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on S/C on Academic & Career-Oriented Education
For HB 120

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Hearing Date: March 5, 2025 2:00 PM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Ray Pieniasek
Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas
Austin, TX

The Agriculture Teachers association is in favor of this bill as we are always in favor of supporting any type of career training and we would be in support of R_PEP funding for applied agricultural engineering (agricultural mechanical and technical systems)

Ryan Franklin
Philanthropy Advocates
Waco, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 120. Philanthropy Advocates brings together nearly 60 grantmakers across Texas who are working to improve outcomes for students and equip them for lifelong economic mobility. By 2031, 63% of Texas jobs will require a credential beyond a high school diploma, yet only 25% of our eighth graders earn these credentials within six years after graduation.

We commend Rep. Bell for authoring HB 120 to strengthen students' ability to achieve postsecondary success and integrate these opportunities into the high school experience. The focus on career and technical education programs in public schools, the Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program, and a high school advising program are impactful strategies that equip students with skills and credentials necessary to enter the workforce.

We appreciate the provision within HB 120 to increase incentive funding to \$150 per student for those enrolled in P-TECH campuses. Providing high school students with industry-aligned learning experiences that result in a postsecondary credential while in high school is a strategic approach to meeting workforce demand and rewarding collaboration among schools, postsecondary education, and industry. Further, we appreciate that HB 120 recognizes successful models for rural students through the expansion of the R-PEP program. R-PEP students significantly increase their postsecondary readiness outcomes, including increased participation in dual credit and industry-based credentials attainment. By eliminating the annual \$5 million cap on R-PEP funding, the Legislature is ensuring that more rural districts across Texas can benefit from this program. Finally, expanding advising through the High School Advising Allotment proposed in HB 120 will help more Texas students achieve successful postsecondary outcomes. We respectfully recommend that advising efforts integrate both college and career pathways, rather than differentiating training for college and career advisors.

Texas has made significant progress in connecting public and postsecondary education. Efforts such as the R-PEP program, the P-TECH school model and the Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program are complementary strategies the state has created to increase student access and completion of postsecondary credentials with labor market value. We encourage this committee to ensure clarity of the complementary nature of these programs so schools and students can maximize the investments in high-impact strategies for students.

The Texas philanthropic sector has worked at the intersection of PK-12 and postsecondary education to bridge gaps in access and completion of postsecondary credentials that will increase lifelong economic opportunity and ability. We know that data-driven investments in industry-aligned education resulting in postsecondary credentials, especially while in high school, ensure students are both college and career ready.

Trista Bishop-Watt
Good Reason Houston
Houston, TX

Dear Chairman Ashby and House Academic & Career-Oriented Education Subcommittee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 120. We greatly appreciate Rep. Bell for his work on this bill, which would significantly benefit student postsecondary preparation, driving better outcomes for graduates. In particular, we'd like to emphasize the critical importance of high quality college and career advising for students.

Good Reason Houston is a nonprofit that collaborates with public school systems to ensure every child in every neighborhood has access to a world-class public school that prepares them to thrive in the Texas of tomorrow. Our research shows that access to pathways that lead to postsecondary credentials are crucial for Houston-area graduates, yet only 27% are able to attain those credentials. Graduates who attain a bachelors degree are 3.8 times more likely to earn a living wage in the Houston area and those who attain a Level I or II certification are three times as likely.

HB 120 establishes a high school advising program and allotment to support high quality advising and direct partnerships with institutions of higher education that offer both degree and professional certification pathways, increasing student access to critical guidance directly aligned to postsecondary opportunities. We also commend the proposal to allow districts to leverage funds to support student transition and persistence in postsecondary pathways for up to two years after graduation.

Good Reason Houston's research findings also underscore an important connection: for most students to secure a living wage, college readiness is not just about academic preparation; it is about career readiness. It is essential that students receive guidance not only on how to navigate the college application process but also on how to identify and pursue career and technical education (CTE) opportunities and professional certifications that align with their skills and interests. For this reason, we respectfully urge the Committee to consider combining college and career advising in HB 120 to ensure students receive holistic, comprehensive guidance to make informed decisions about their future.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration and believe HB 120 offers an opportunity to ensure that students have access to high-quality, tailored advising that prepares them for success in both college and the workforce. By providing students with the tools and guidance they need to make informed decisions about their post-graduation plans, HB 120 will help ensure that students are equipped to thrive in their chosen pathways and, ultimately, achieve financial stability.