CENTER FOR STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AUGUST 17 AND 18, 2026
House Committee on Higher Education Interim Hearing Written Testimony

Dear Chairman Wilson, Vice-Chair Howard, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the Committee's interim charges. It is estimated that Texas will add 2.1 million jobs by 2032 (a 14% increase from 2022), and that over 70% of this growth will require education and training beyond high school graduation, particularly for STEM-related industries.[1] Considering that only 37% of Texas graduates end up earning any credential in six years after high school, Texas has an urgent need to streamline pathways for students to access these high-demand, high-wage jobs.[2] We respectfully provide the following comments on interim charges related to monitoring SB 1786, aligning advising initiatives, and increasing credential completion:

INTERIM CHARGE #1: SB 1786 MONITORING

Community colleges play a crucial role in credentialing Texas' workforce. Since the passage of HB 8 (88R) and SB 1786 (89R), when the state shifted towards defining, awarding, and refining credentials of value for community college funding, outcomes have skyrocketed. Since 2023:

- Community college enrollment has increased 11%
- Overall credential completion has increased 23%
- Dual credit enrollment has increased 20%[3,4]

This increases are a positive sign that the incentives in HB 8 and SB 1786 are working as designed, placing more students on the path to earning a living wage. However, these outcomes have also translated into funding challenges as colleges have outperformed initial projections. **As the Committee contemplates implementation of community college outcomes-based funding, we recommend members to consider the following:**

- Opportunities and challenges, particularly around data availability and transparency, in making the funding formula reliable, sustainable, and predictable;
- Programs, people, and policies that community colleges have implemented as a result of the formula changes;
- Potential refinement of awarded outcomes to increase alignment to high-wage, high-demand fields; and,
- A commitment to keeping the dynamic integrity of the formula intact.

INTERIM CHARGE #7: ALIGNING ADVISING INITIATIVES

Access to high-quality college and career advising can have a tremendous impact on students' educational and career trajectories, particularly for the most vulnerable and at-risk students. However, as counselors manage higher caseloads and the postsecondary landscape becomes increasingly complex, students are most often left to navigate their futures independently and without support, increasing their likelihood of not earning a credential.[5]

Recognizing the need to support students during key transitions, particularly between middle and high school and after high school graduation, the Legislature has made an investment in a number of advising tools: My Texas Future, ADVi, and Texas OnCourse, to name a few. The Legislature has also made an investments in programs that try to support and/or incentivize advising best practices: the Effective Advising Framework, the Texas Regional Pathways Network, R-PEP, and ECHS and P-TECH programs. However, these initiatives are fragmented across the Tri-Agency and lack the statewide infrastructure and dedicated investment to make a meaningful impact. **As the Committee researches the current advising landscape and determines recommendations to improve advising quality and access, we recommend members to consider the following:**

- The impact of and value in investing in a dedicated, trained professional to provide college and career advising services;
- The impact of a disjointed system, particularly around data, definitions, and incentives, in providing effective college and career advising; and,
- The need for (and institutional capacity of) delivering effective college and career advising at each transitional point in a student's educational journey.

INTERIM CHARGE #5: INCREASING CREDENTIAL COMPLETION

Texas students with prior credit have a difficult time transferring their credit to and between Texas institutions of higher education. The average transfer student attempts to transfer roughly 47 semester credit hours, indicating that transfer students are already progressing in an established postsecondary pathway. Unfortunately, these credits are not always successfully transferring to their receiving institution or being applied towards their degree. In 2024, over 45,000 courses were denied credit. Out of these courses, roughly 40% were denied due to the course being "outside the degree requirement."[6] For a transfer student, each denied course credit results in a longer timeframe towards credential completion and additional cost, making college less affordable and a degree less achievable.[7]

As Texas continues to invest in credential attainment through dual credit and associate degrees, and overall diversify pathways to high-wage, high-demand fields, it is imperative that the state makes it easier for transfer students to move seamlessly between institutions and graduate on time. **Therefore, as the Committee investigates ways to improve credential completion, we recommend members consider the following:**

- Findings from the General Education Curriculum Advisory Committee Report, as established by SB 37 (89R) to streamline the statewide academic foundation; and,
- Barriers to successful transfer, such as poor or inadequate advising, difficulties with data sharing and interoperability, and lack of systemic alignment.

CLOSING

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Overall, we are excited about the state's continued bipartisan commitment to investing in the future of Texas' workforce. We look forward to the Committee's discussions to address challenges and recommend solutions to improve student outcomes and make postsecondary education more accessible and affordable.

1 TWC. Texas Workforce Report 2024-2025.
2 TEA. 2025 Annual Report.
3 Texas Higher Education Accountability System. Excludes Texas State Technical Colleges and Lamar State Colleges.
4 Texas 2036. *The Texas Model: Rewiring Community College Finance for Student Success.* July 2026.
5 Mathematica. Education to Workforce Indicator Framework.
6 THECB. SB 25 Report on Non-Transferable Credit. April 2026.
7 THECB. 2025 Texas Transfer Report.

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