



Testimony by Jacob Fraire, President and CEO, TACC Before the Senate Committee on Higher Education

In support of SB1230 - Texas Commission on Community College Finance
March 31, 2021

Chairman Creighton, Vice Chair West, and Distinguished Senators –

My name is Jacob Fraire; I serve as President and CEO of the Texas Association of Community Colleges, testifying in support of SB 1230.

TACC is joined by the Community College Association of Texas Trustees, and the Texas Community College Teachers Association in supporting SB 1230 and extends our gratitude to Senator Taylor for leading an effort to create the Texas Commission on Community College Finance.

For brevity, my remarks will focus on three salient questions: 1) Why a Commission? 2) What is its primary goal? 3) How will we define success for the Commission?

Why a Commission?

The answer is as complex as the subject to be studied. As Chairman Taylor stated earlier, the primary component of the existing community college formula – the Contact Hour Funding – was established in 1973. Assuming the commission is created and its recommendations are considered by this body in 2023, the funding formula would have existed one-half century.

Of course, age alone is not reason enough to examine the efficacy community college state funding. Indeed, at age 55, I hope to live another few years before my children start examining the efficacy of their “Dad.”

In all seriousness, we believe the current funding formula is inadequate and does not account for the vast growth (actual and projected) in the state’s population, demographic changes, and equally important the growing connection between a postsecondary education and the skills demands of today’s economy.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature graciously provided an increase of \$68 million in state formula funding for community colleges, and yet eleven community college districts saw a reduction in their respective allocation of state funding.

As it stands today, SB 1 provides level funding for the overall community college formula, and yet 30 individual college districts are slated to see reductions to their respective state funding.

The potential consequences are so stark, TACC is seeking hold harmless funding – a budget technique considered a method of last resort by budget writers and one rarely supported by TACC.

We believe the time is right for a thoughtful, data-informed examination of state funding for Texas community colleges.

What is the primary goal of the commission?

The Commission will examine state funding levels for public community colleges that would be sufficient to sustain viable community college education and training programs throughout the state and improve student outcomes in alignment with the state postsecondary goals.

In the 1980s, the state's share of community college instructional cost was more than 60%. Today, that share is just under 25%.

We believe that a thoughtful examination of the state's role in supporting community colleges will result in equally thoughtful findings and recommendations on a sufficient, forward-facing state's share.

Finally, how will we define success for the Commission's work?

We suggest that the commission would be most successful if it embraces a focused slate of issues for examination and deliberation. Those issues are outlined in section 130.1305, paragraph "h" - at the bottom of page 2. We believe a focused approach will optimize the commission's deliberations and ultimately its recommendations.

Texas has access to robust state and national data. The commission certainly can and likely will review data and relevant studies on several tangential issues.

For example, the new census data will inform the scale and types of student community colleges will need to serve in the decade ahead and student outcome data will help discern existing gaps among the wide spectrum of students served by our colleges.

In closing, TACC is committed to supporting the work of the Commission through its own research capacity, securing support from our philanthropic partners, and securing the insight from subject matter experts.

We applaud Chairman Taylor for his leadership in advancing this important legislation.

Thank you.