

March 20, 2023

To: House Higher Education Committee

Re: Written Testimony Submitted FOR House Bill 8

Honorable Chairman Kuempel and Members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Victoria Hoover, and I am a proud recent graduate of Tyler Junior College and a current philosophy student at Stephen F. Austin State University studying to become a writer and future community college educator. I am also a “non-traditional” student in rural East Texas. As a member of the Student Advisory Council, I testified before the Texas Commission on Community College Finance and am grateful to see their recommendations reflected in House Bill 8. I am here to speak in support of the bill on behalf of students, rural Texans, and adult learners.

Tyler Junior College is where I found the self-respect, commitment, and community that helped make me the person I am today. Without the time, energy, and encouragement of those at TJC, I would not be one of only six finalists from my college presenting academic research as an undergraduate next month. Our community colleges are like the hard-working Texans they serve. They hold down multiple jobs to get things done, shore up the communities they are a part of, and wear many hats without complaint despite so often being under-appreciated and under-compensated for their efforts.

We want all Texans to be successful, yet the breakneck pace of technology threatens to sweep underemployed and undereducated Texans out of the workforce entirely. By 2030, 62% of jobs in Texas will require at least some postsecondary education, but only 47% of adults in Texas have those credentials.

That’s what makes HB 8 so necessary - it ensures state funding for community colleges grows with outcomes that help students compete and succeed in today’s changing economy. This new formula would also account for and reward the success of those who might need additional support - economically and academically disadvantaged students and adult learners like me. This incentivizes community colleges to support all students in earning credentials of value.

HB 8 also addresses the unique needs of smaller community colleges by providing a base level of funding to ensure rural Texans have the education and training opportunities to help grow their regional economies. Imagine if high school graduates could earn the credentials and develop the skills to support their families without having to relocate to a big city.

I urge you to support HB 8 to build a more prosperous, successful state for all Texans. Thank you for the opportunity to speak for students and participate in our legislative process.

Sincerely,

Victoria Hoover

Member, Texas Community College Student Advisory Council