



**Written Testimony Submitted FOR Senate Bill 1786  
Submitted by Educate Texas**

Honorable Chair Creighton and Members of the Senate Committee on Education K-16:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 1786 by Chair Creighton. Educate Texas, an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, works to advance our vision that all Texas students earn a college degree or credential that leads to a living wage and thriving communities. Senate Bill 1786 supports this vision by strengthening House Bill 8 (88R) historic community college finance legislation passed last session.

**Senate Bill 1786 enhances House Bill 8 (88R).** When the Texas Legislature unanimously passed House Bill 8 last session it shifted community college finance to an outcomes-based funding formula and prioritization. By rewarding community colleges for successful completion of dual credit, transfer to public 4-year institutions in the states, and credentials of value, this legislature created 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.

House Bill 8 (88R) increases degree and credential attainment at a time when less than a quarter of Texas students are attaining a degree or credential within six years of graduating high school. This is alarming, since we know that by 2030, more than 60% of jobs in Texas will require education or training beyond a high school diploma. Texas community colleges are central to this effort, enrolling over 43% of all higher education students in the state and awarding 96% of all career & technical education (CTE) credentials in the state.

**Senate Bill 1786 expands Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST).** The FAST program provides free dual credit to economically disadvantaged high school students. In its first two years, FAST has increased dual credit enrollment by 22%, supported 260,000 students, and covered 1.46 million semester credit hours at no cost to students. **We support SB 1786's provision to expand FAST eligibility** to students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in the current and previous four years, ensuring the program reaches those it was designed to serve. As a technical assistance provider for Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECHs), Educate Texas has worked to close gaps for the necessary postsecondary credentials Texans will need for current and future Texas jobs. We have worked with districts and institutes of higher education to negotiate dual credit opportunities which are not always free and therefore readily available for all students. FAST is making the opportunities greater for more students, especially in our rural communities and in those that have less access to institutes of higher education.



***Senate Bill 1786 expands the Transfer outcome.*** Currently, community colleges are not awarded performance tier funding when students complete 15 SCH and successfully transfer to a private or independent college or university in Texas. Rather than disincentivizing transfer to private or independent colleges or universities in the state, **we support SB 1786's provision to reward community colleges for transfer regardless of the Texas institution to which the student matriculates.**

***SB 1786 strengthens the Credential of Value methodology.*** Credentials of value aim to put students on a trajectory for success in the workforce while minimizing the cost of their education. We **support SB 1786's refinement of the credential of value methodology** to ensure the state maximizes a student's ability to earn a competitive salary in a high demand industry. The flexibility in THECB's rulemaking process allows for adjustments as workforce needs evolve, ensuring that Texas remains responsive to economic shifts. As additional data becomes available, Texas can continue to refine its approach to maximize student success and economic impact. Educate Texas recognizes that an updated methodology will come with some challenges for our partners, and we look forward to helping our PTECHs to ensure they can also align pathways and coursework towards credentials of value.

***SB 1786 enhances data towards stronger student outcomes. We also support SB 1786's improvements to data collection in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission.*** The bill enhances unemployment insurance (UI) wage data and will produce regional labor market analyses for community college service areas. Our regions have different challenges and opportunities that require more in depth data so that we can respond proactively. Strengthening data on job demand and wage outcomes will ensure that state-funded programs remain tightly aligned with workforce needs, ensuring students can pursue pathways that lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs.

The solutions that SB 1786 proposes have overwhelming public support—**92% of Texas voters agree that investing in community colleges is essential as student outcomes improve.** Texas has made significant strides in aligning education with workforce needs, but sustaining this progress requires a continued commitment from the Legislature. By fully funding the outcomes-based formula and strengthening policies that expand access, improve transfer pathways, and refine credentials of value, Texas can solidify its leadership in workforce development. Investing in community colleges is not just an education policy—it's an economic imperative. The success of our students is the success of Texas, and we urge legislators to uphold these critical investments in the next biennium.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla Aquino-Garza  
Senior Director, Policy & Advocacy  
Educate Texas