

Written Testimony FOR SB 1786 - Public Community/Junior Colleges
Senate Education K-16 Committee
March 27, 2025

Honorable Chair Creighton, Vice Chair Campbell, and Members of the Senate Education K-16 Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 1786. Philanthropy Advocates brings together almost 60 private, community, and corporate foundations working across Texas to improve outcomes for Texas students and equip them for economic mobility.

We applaud the committee for the investments made in community colleges last session. Already, we are seeing strong implementation of the new framework for community college finance. For example, in its first two years, the Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program has increased dual credit enrollment by 22%.¹ This is an incredible result of the meaningful policy framework the Texas Legislature created in 2023.

Since the passage of this dynamic funding model and outcomes-driven approach to aligning education with economic opportunity, Texas philanthropy has supported strategies to ensure community colleges could adapt their practices to the new finance model. As philanthropy has worked to support colleges in aligning their programs to Texas labor markets, a vital gap in access to labor market data has become an evident limitation for colleges to maximize outcomes for their students.

We support efforts made in SB 1786 to improve data collection in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission to **enhance unemployment insurance (UI) wage data and produce regional labor market analyses for community college service areas**. Strengthening data on job demand and wage outcomes will ensure that state-funded programs remain tightly aligned with workforce needs. More accurate, real-time data will enable better decision-making in shaping education and training programs, ultimately helping Texans secure well-paying jobs and driving economic growth across the state.

By 2030, over **60% of Texas jobs** will require some kind of postsecondary credential, but **less than a quarter of Texas students** are attaining a degree or credential in the state within six years of graduating high school.² Philanthropy Advocates knows Texas cannot reach this goal without education systems that equip students for lifelong academic and career success. Specifically, we believe Texas cannot maintain global competitiveness or advance economic mobility for Texas families without thriving community colleges.

We appreciate the policy changes proposed in this bill to continue Texas's leadership across the nation in driving student and economic success, and we appreciate your consideration.

Contact Information: *Ryan Franklin, Managing Director, Policy & Advocacy, Philanthropy Advocates, rfranklin@philanthropyadvocates.org*

¹ Texas House Appropriations Committee Hearing, September 10, 2024. THECB 2012 8th Grade Cohort data.

² Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031*.