

March 23, 2023

To: Senate Higher Education Subcommittee

Re: Written Testimony Submitted FOR Senate Bill 2539

Honorable Chairman Creighton and Members of the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee,

My name is Angel Garcia Donjuan and I am an alumnus of Dallas College, currently attending the University of North Texas and studying to become an Urban Planner. As a member of the Texas Community College Student Advisory Council, I contributed to the Commission on Community College Finance's work throughout last year researching and informing policy solutions to ensure students across the state get the support they need to succeed and enter the workforce.

I am here to testify in support of SB 2539 because I have personally experienced how life-altering access to dual credit can be. I was fortunate to go to high school in Dallas ISD, where students can enroll in these courses tuition-free at Dallas College. Thanks to that access, I was not only ahead in terms of credits, but just as important, I felt confident about making the transition to college following graduation. The 21 credit hours I earned allowed me the flexibility to do an internship in high school which helped me gain valuable skills and learn what career direction I wanted to pursue. As proposed by SB 2539, my community college would be awarded reliable performance funding for my success as a first-generation student from a low-income background.

Unfortunately, dual credit opportunities like those I had are neither accessible nor affordable for all high school students in Texas - simply because of their zip code. The cost of dual credit tuition and fees can range as high as \$4,100, presenting real barriers for students who are economically disadvantaged. The "ACE scholarship" proposed by SB 2539 would remove this financial barrier without requiring a complex, burdensome application process. Importantly, it would also ensure the cost of dual credit tuition and fees remain affordable for all students.

As my own story demonstrates, dual credit participation has shown to increase postsecondary retention, success and completion. If our state is serious about meeting our postsecondary attainment goals for a Talent Strong Texas, now is the time to ensure this game-changing opportunity is available and affordable to all students, regardless of income.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to stand before you today. I urge you to vote for SB 2539 to expand access to dual credit and transform the lives and livelihoods of generations of Texans to come.

Sincerely,

Angel Garcia Donjuan

Member, Texas Community College Student Advisory Council