

March 23rd, 2023

To: Texas Senate Higher Education Subcommittee

Re: Testimony Submitted FOR Senate Bill 2539

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

My name is Chelsea Talley and I am a student at Tarrant County College and an aspiring first generation college graduate. I am a student council chair, a Community College Student Advisory Council member, and an advocate for homeless students and survivors of domestic violence. As a parenting student with a child who is also enrolled in dual credit, I know first hand the opportunities that community colleges offer and believe SB 2539 can help more students and families like mine achieve their academic and career goals.

Community colleges are open-enrollment institutions that provide the necessary flexibility and specialization that students like me benefit from. As a parenting student who has experienced poverty, TCC was a place that I have been able to get involved in student government and utilize amazing resources from the library, advisors, and the counseling department. I know so many other students with situations similar to mine could thrive too if community colleges were better funded and incentivized to provide the holistic support adult learners and economically disadvantaged students need to successfully earn high value credentials. The proposed base tier and performance tier funding in SB 2539 would do just that and help more hardworking Texans achieve economic stability for themselves and their families through a high demand career.

Dual credit is another key way to help more students and families reach their goals. Recently, my daughter, a student enrolled in Texas Connections Academy for online learning, missed a semester of her dual credit college classes due to financial hardship. That semester, I couldn't afford to pay out of pocket to cover the tuition and fees. Dual credit scholarships for low-income students like those proposed in SB 2539 would remove cost as a barrier for my daughter and others. We had to make a choice, and while I chose to feed and shelter my child, I wish that I was able to put her education first. Being the head of the household responsible for navigating my family through life as I strive to exit poverty, these are some of the challenges we face.

I support SB 2539 because I have personally seen the devastating impact that not having the money to afford higher education, housing, *and* food has had on my family. I urge you to seize this opportunity for our state and move us toward a future in which families like mine no longer have to choose between basic needs and pursuing our educational and professional goals.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to share why passing SB 2539 is important to me.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Talley

Member, Texas Community College Student Advisory Council