

March 27, 2025

To: Senate K-16 Committee
From: Texas PACE
Re: Senate Bill 1786
Position: For

Chairman Creighton and Members of the Senate K-16 Committee,

Good morning, my name is Danna Gonzalez, and I am here to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1786. I am a first-generation student, currently finishing my associate's degree in business administration at Amarillo College. This fall, I plan to transfer to West Texas A&M University to study International Business.

As a child, my dream wasn't to become famous or wealthy; it was simply to earn an education and use it to help others on their own journeys. While in high school, I was fortunate enough to take dual credit courses offered through my local community college. Those courses challenged me, prepared for the work ahead, and gave me flexibility for work and extracurriculars once I enrolled. At the time, I remember some of my high school classmates were concerned about the costs of those classes. Thanks to the FAST program, students who may lack the financial resources but are ready to take on college-level courses will get the same opportunity that I did.

Last fall, when I was unexpectedly kicked out of my home, it was the faculty, advisors, and financial aid officers at Amarillo College who supported me during such a difficult and challenging time. They helped me secure an on-campus job, access resources like the food pantry, and even furnish my apartment. Because Amarillo College invested in me as a person and made sure I had what I needed to succeed, I stayed on track to complete my degree. Now that I'm preparing to graduate, it was my advisors who were always thinking ahead, helping me plan which classes to take so as many as possible would transfer.

It hasn't been easy, and there are still obstacles to overcome on my journey toward earning my degrees, but I know I wouldn't have made it this far without the people and support at Amarillo College. I urge you to support SB 1786 and continue to invest in the community colleges that make it possible for students like me to pursue the education I always dreamed of.

Sincerely,
Danna Gonzalez
Member, Texas Community College Student Advisory Council