



Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

XXXXXX XX, 2017

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Dear XXXXXX:

On behalf of the Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA), I am writing to inform you of our serious concerns with HB 653, relating to eligibility for a Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG). Several of the bill's proposed changes to the TEOG program would impose stricter eligibility requirements on financially needy and underrepresented student populations, thus potentially denying these students access to a higher education.

Our Association, which represents approximately 2,000 financial aid professionals at 170 Texas institutions of higher education, has learned from its members that the proposed changes would adversely affect students with the highest financial need if this bill were to become law. The concerns of TASFAA members include, but are not limited to:

1. Limiting TEOG awards to tuition and fees minus Pell would reduce the total aid amount to the point of potentially forcing students to not attend college; and/or incur additional loan debt to cover educational expense. TEOG awards currently assist these students in covering other costs such as books, residence hall charges, off-campus rent, food, etc.
2. A large percentage of students at two-year institutions are non-traditional and many are employed with competing financial priorities. The financial assistance they receive beyond their Pell Grant is often what allows them the resources to attend full-time, if at all.
3. Students would no longer have a stable TEOG award amount as part of their aid package as the TEOG would fluctuate according to hours enrolled and actual related charges. This will have a negative impact on the students' ability to plan for meeting college costs and could negatively influence retention rates.

These are just several of the concerns expressed by our Association's members regarding HB 653, but they demonstrate the additional barriers facing our state's underrepresented students. The loss of grant aid would push many students to increased loan usage and a possible conflict with THECB's 60X30 plan to maintain borrowing at or below 60% of first year wages for graduates of Texas public schools. We also note that the TEOG grant criteria are already stricter than those for most federal student aid programs.

We ask that you consider the serious concerns identified with HB 653 and its potential negative impact on students from historically underrepresented populations. As the single statewide professional association whose members administer the state and federal student financial aid programs, our members stand prepared to, and look forward to, lending our expertise in helping inform the discussions on this bill.

Sincerely,

Alan David Ahmad
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