



Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

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XXXXX, 2017

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XXX XXXXX
Austin, Texas

Dear XX XXXXX:

On behalf of the Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA), I am writing to inform you of our serious concerns with SB 885, a bill relating to eligibility for a TEXAS Grant. Several of the bill's proposed changes to the TEXAS Grant 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 the amount of potential TEXAS Grant aid to the amount of tuition and fees minus any Pell Grant received by the student. TEXAS Grant awards currently assist these students in covering other costs such as residence hall charges, food, off-campus rent, etc. Limiting TEXAS Grant to tuition and fees minus Pell potentially forces students to incur additional loan debt to cover educational expenses.
2. If the eligibility for TEXAS Grant is limited to tuition and fees minus Pell, any student receiving a legislatively mandated tuition waiver/exemption would no longer be eligible for a TEXAS Grant.
3. The result of the bill is that students would no longer have a stable TEXAS Grant award amount as part of their aid package as the TEXAS Grant 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 SB 885, 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, possibly conflicting with THECB 60X30 plans to maintain borrowing at or below 60% of first year wages for graduates of Texas public schools. We also note that the TEXAS Grant criteria are already stricter than those for most federal student aid programs.

We ask that you consider the serious concerns identified with SB 885 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. Our website is www.tasfaa.org.

Sincerely,

AD Ahmad

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