

April 29, 2015

**House Higher Education Committee**  
**Written Testimony for HB 1502 – Position: Support**

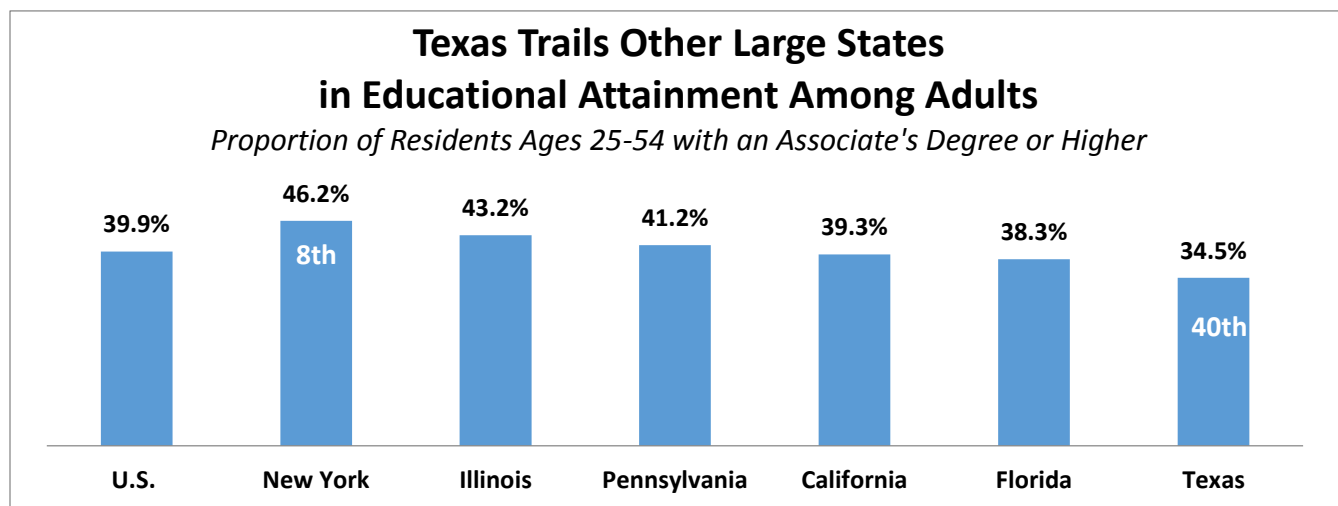
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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full-potential.

We support the Texas Affordable Baccalaureate Program, a Bachelor of Applied Science degree program at South Texas College and Texas A&M University-Commerce that is designed to serve the growing adult population in Texas without a postsecondary degree. Through an accelerated competency-based education model, the program allows students to complete as many classes as their schedule allows in each 7-week period for a flat-rate tuition. The curriculum is delivered online in a self-paced format that includes individual coaches, tutors and content experts, as well as full-time faculty for upper-division coursework.

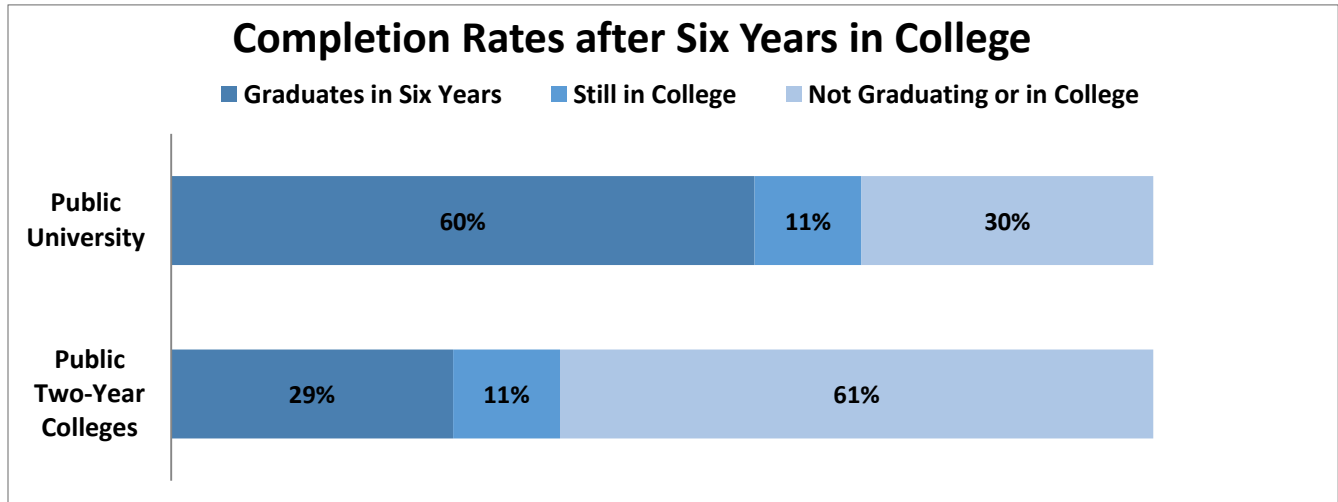
HB 1502 will remove a potential financial barrier for returning college students who have taken courses in the past but who dropped out before completing their degrees. The State of Texas currently withholds formula funding to public institutions for students who have dropped more than 6 classes without receiving a grade, taken more than 30 hours than what is required for their degree, or attempted to repeat the same course more than three times.

This is particularly important because Texas is struggling to produce enough college graduates to meet employers' needs, and without some significant changes, Texas will continue to rank near the bottom when it comes to adults earning an Associate's Degree or higher. By 2020, 62 percent of jobs in Texas will require some form of postsecondary education, but only one-third of prime working-age adults today have an Associate's Degree or higher.<sup>i</sup> That leaves Texas well behind other large states when it comes to educational attainment.



Source: CPPP Analysis, Working Poor Families Project, Population Reference Bureau, analysis of 2012 American Community Survey

College students in Texas, both in four-year universities and two-year community colleges, are struggling to complete degrees at the rate our state needs to provide the skilled labor force required for competitive economic growth in the future. Of the more than 170,000 entering college freshmen at Texas universities and community colleges in 2008, more than 84,000 or nearly one-half, did not graduate or remain in college after six years.<sup>ii</sup>



Source: THECB, *First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates, Fall 2008 Cohort*.

The Texas Affordable Baccalaureate Program is a tool that can help alleviate these challenges. The program attempts to leverage the prior learning that adults and returning college students already have in order to shorten the pathway to a degree. HB 1502 will ensure that these students are able to take full advantage of the program without any increases in the flat-tuition rate due to the number of courses they attempted to take or drop during their prior college attendance.

<sup>i</sup> Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl, Georgetown University, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements by 2020*, Web: <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/kg8r28e48gsaw8ypplpx>. And Working Poor Families Project (WFPF), Population Reference Bureau (PRB), analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey educational attainment data by state.

<sup>ii</sup> Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), *THECB, The 2015 Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates, Fall 2008 Cohort*.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Oliver Bernstein at [bernstein@cphp.org](mailto:bernstein@cphp.org) or 512.823.2875.

**About CPPP**

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is an independent public policy organization that uses research, analysis and advocacy to promote solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. Learn more at [CPPP.org](http://CPPP.org).

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