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Testimony on SB 764 – Senate Committee on Finance

Mia Ibarra, Policy Analyst – ibarra@cPPP.org

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

We know that you want to make the best decisions for Texas, and we believe you deserve to have the most accurate and up-to-date information possible when faced with complex issues that affect millions of lives.

Additional data can provide valuable context on deeply complex issues. However, a study that includes only the costs to the state resulting from unauthorized immigration would capture only half of a complicated equation by ignoring the role of undocumented immigrants in particular on our economy.

CPPP recommends updating a 2006 special report developed by the state Comptroller’s Office, *Undocumented Immigrants in Texas: A Financial Analysis of the Impact to the State Budget and Economy*, to shed light on the implications of unauthorized immigration for public services at the state and local level, and on the impact of this population on our state’s economy and state revenue base. The original 2006 report found that undocumented immigrants in Texas generate more taxes and revenue than the state spends on them. Further, it found that the absence of the 1.4 million unauthorized immigrants living in the state at the time would have resulted in a \$17.6 billion loss to state gross product.

It’s past time to update this comprehensive analysis. We have experienced significant economic changes over the past decade, and migration patterns have shifted, too. In a March 2017 analysis from CPPP called *Immigrants Drive the Texas Economy*, we found that the estimated 1.7 million undocumented immigrants living in Texas contribute about \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes each year. And while there are more undocumented immigrants living in Texas today, they have been living here much longer on average than the undocumented population was in 2006 according to data from the Pew Research Center. Researchers estimate that there are over 800,000 U.S. citizen children living in mixed-status Texas families with at least one parent who is undocumented. Longer stays in the U.S. also have important implications for how undocumented immigrants in Texas participate in the economy — as workers, business owners, consumers, and taxpayers.

We encourage you amend SB 764 to require the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to issue estimates not only of the costs to the state of unauthorized immigration, but also the revenue and economic impacts. This change will help ensure lawmakers have the most complete information available when making far-reaching policy decisions on behalf of all Texans, regardless of where they were born or how they came to reside in our great state.

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