Outline of Testimony

House Public Education Committee
March 17, 2009

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Texas Higher Education Board Member

House Bill 3

- *Overall*: My perspective on this bill is both as a member of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as well as a past member of the Houston ISD Board. This bill provides the next steps needed to continue the momentum that public schools have embraced for both rigor and accountability. This bill encourages school districts to focus on college and post secondary success. Texas has been recognized in the country for having a strong accountability system which is why No Child Left Behind was patterned after Texas. I see this bill as a P-16 bill. As the legislation encourages and will provide measures for students to graduate college ready, it is an opportunity to have both Commissioners of Education and Higher Education share the roles and responsibilities.

- *End of course exam*: We have outgrown TAKs. We know that TAKs is not a measure of college readiness because although every student must pass TAKs to graduate from high school, over 50% of incoming college freshmen still need developmental education. In fact, TAKs doesn't measure the same student/cohort. A teacher teaching 3rd grade, for example, has 95% of his/her class pass one year and 90% pass the next – that is not measuring the same students' success. This bill, with end of course exams, will measure the actual student.

- *Promotion standards*: A caution on the promotion panel and parents so that students are not passed to the next grade unless ready; the acceleration model is a good one as we cannot teach the retained student the same way as before and expect different results. It is important not to return to social promotion if we want students graduating college/workforce ready.

- *Multiple pathways*: All pathways must have rigor. I agree with Commissioner Paredes about keeping the "recommended" term: Recommended Texas Diploma must remain the default and not make it too easy to move a student to the "Standard." I also agree with Commissioner Paredes that the term for that level should be labelled "Basic" and not "Standard."

- *Auditing dropouts:* Must have clear consistent indicators; also, taking more than 4 years to graduate is not a dropout.

- *Data access:* Creating the data system through which the student or the student's parent can easily access the student's individual assessment data – we have needed this for years.

- *Dual credit*: Create an indicator for high schools that would count towards their accountability for numbers of students taking dual credit. This would be an incentive for high schools to offer dual credit courses (as required by former HB1) just as high schools are encouraged to offer AP. This would result in more students graduating with more college credits and the incentive to continue in college.

- *Charter school partnerships*: Create a shared accountability for school districts to partner with charter schools. Currently, if a school is reconstituted or if a school wishes to partner with a successful charter like YES does at Lee High School in Houston, Lee High loses the accountability/success of those students sent to YES. If both the charter and the partnering school district/school could share in the students' successes, more schools would look to the opportunity to partner with charter schools.

- *Achievement gap*: Excellent that this bill works towards closing the achievement gap by measuring between student populations

- *Inconsistency:*

    1. regarding the proposed terminology for schools and districts to be "accredited" or not "accredited." In the bill, it is also stated that to be accepted to a Texas higher educational institution, a student must have graduated from an accredited school.

    2. a student cannot receive a diploma unless he passes the end of course; however, if the end of course exam only counts for 15% of the grade, a student could pass the course having failed the exam.

Finally, this bill is a golden opportunity to enhance the relationship between what P-12 determines as a well educated graduate ready for college or the workplace to be aligned with college and university expectations that ensure the student's success.