

Senate Education Committee
Senate Higher Education Committee
Joint Hearing
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Written Testimony

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Thank you for the opportunity to address your committees on this very important issue impacting the future of education in Texas. Providing the opportunity for students to successfully gain college credit in high school through dual credit is both beneficial for our students, their families and for our state.

Dual credit courses provided during high school allow for students to accumulate college credit in an environment that is designed to support their success. These opportunities allow students to accelerate their college experience at no cost or at a much reduced cost for their families.

I understand that there are concerns that the state is funding the student both for the public school and the community college. While this may be true, there are significant benefits to the state that warrant the continuation and expansion of dual credit courses. In addition, changes to the current funding mechanism is unlikely to create significant savings for the state because the student taking the dual credit course in high school is likely to take courses after graduation from high school. Taking these courses in high school saves the student and their families significant monies while accelerating the completion of college.

I believe it is important to eliminate any barriers that might prohibit a student from taking advantage of dual credit courses. In some school districts, like Houston where I spent my last four years, tuition waivers were provided by their local community college. Consequently, there were no costs for tuition and fees for either the student or the public schools preventing any need to consider charging students. However, the conditions are different in various parts of the state.

South Plains College and Lubbock ISD work in collaboration to provide dual credit courses to students on the campuses of LISD schools. Student enrollment in

LISD/SPC dual-credit courses has increased by more than one-third over the last five years. Dual credit provides a good value for the investment, for families and for the state. A LISD student taking a course on a Lubbock ISD campus is charged for the fees and dues associated with the course, but he/she pays about half as much in fees as they would on a South Plains College campus.

Although Lubbock ISD is not within the taxing jurisdiction of SPC, it is one of 64 school districts within the 15-county service region of the college. This year, only nine percent of SPC students lived in the college's taxing jurisdiction. None of the almost 800 LISD students taking dual credit lived within the college's taxing jurisdiction. Because of unique circumstances in different parts of the state, a "one size fits all" approach to decisions about funding could be detrimental.

In Lubbock ISD, we provide the teacher, facilities, utilities and other support for dual-credit classes. Often, students are taking a class for dual credit and Advanced Placement credit in the same classroom. Denying students the ability to count the students in their school ADA calculations would remove any incentive for schools to offer dual credit classes. In 2008-09, 805 students took 2600 dual credit semester classes among 42 different courses.

Less than two weeks prior to the state of school in August of 2008, Lubbock ISD and districts across the state were notified of a change in interpretation of TAC 74.25 and TAC 4.81-4.85 resulting changes to the 2008-2009 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook. Specifically, the information of concern is addressed in the Texas Education Agency Handbook which would not allow the time students were in dual credit courses to count toward the 240 minute requirement. Had it not been for the intervention of Senator Shapiro and Senator Duncan that resulted in the delay of this new rule, Lubbock ISD would have been forced to cancel the courses for those 805 students rather than lose \$2 M in ADA funding or expend more than \$310,000 annually in tuition and textbook costs.

We continue to explore every avenue, such as grant monies and contributions from local businesses, to provide support for low-income students to avail themselves of dual credit courses. In addition, we continue to work with our local colleges and universities to identify solutions so that tuition waivers can be provided for all students. Requiring districts to incur the cost for all students would seriously jeopardize the ability of the district to continue to operate and expand the program.

Thank you for considering various local conditions by allowing us the necessary flexibility to continue offer dual credit courses to our students.