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Margaret Moran
National LULAC President
League of United Latin American Citizens
1133 19th Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Members of the Texas Senate,

As national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, I am writing on behalf of our organization, whose mission is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States. With a storied history in the civil rights battles on education across the country, including the role of LULAC-Texas in developing the “Little School of 400,” the model for what is now known as the Head Start program, we are well aware of the need for a robust, engaging and rigorous high school experience that prepares students for college and career.

Texas has long been a national leader in promoting high expectations for all students. With the Recommended High School Program, Texas became one of the first states in the nation to set the expectation that all high school students take a course of study that will prepare them for college and the workplace. Texas has made real progress in recent years. High school graduation rates have increased, and gaps between students of color and their white peers have narrowed. In particular, the Latino graduation rate in Texas has grown 13% since 2007 (when current graduation requirements were adopted), from 69% to 82%, significantly closing the gap with their white peers.

Likewise, the percentage of Latino graduates meeting the state’s college and career ready definition in ELA and Math achievement has increased markedly (based on meeting a “college-career ready” score on Exit-Level TAKS, SAT, or ACT.), from 21% of Latino students meeting the college and career ready definition to 42%. That is a tremendous achievement for the state of Texas.

Thus, it is with concern that I write to you regarding Senate Bill 1724 and SB 3. This proposed legislation to change the current graduation framework suggests that Texas should back down from high expectations and replace them with weaker requirements. I urge you not to take this course.



The proposed changes would take Texas back to the bad old days of pervasive tracking, ignoring the clear evidence that all students, regardless of the path they choose after high school, need the same rigorous course content to succeed in an economy that demands high-level knowledge and skills. Texas' economy needs high-level workers to stay strong. To earn a family-supporting wage, a high school diploma simply isn't enough. For example, 4 out of 5 of the fastest growing job fields require that more than 90 percent of workers have some form of higher education.¹ For those students who choose to pursue higher education, a rigorous high school curriculum is the surest path to college success.

A departure from the current 4x4 curriculum and an investment in “applied” courses, should be mindful of the Advanced Placement, college-level concurrent/dual enrollment, and International Baccalaureate courses that currently exist. During the 2010-11 academic year, only 34 percent of Latino high school graduates, and 22 percent of African American graduates, who qualified to participate in a dual credit course actually enrolled in any of these courses. This data suggests that wealthier students, students who have been traditionally well-served by the educational system, and non-English Language Learners will continue to take the courses necessary to prepare them for college or for a well-paying career. But low-income, Latino, and African American young people as well as English Language Learners — who together comprise the majority of Texas students — will not.

Lowering graduation requirements sends the wrong message to students, families and communities. The proposed legislation will actually create fewer pathways to additional education for Latino students and English Language Learners. The current 4x4 graduation standard is improving graduation rates and college and career readiness among *all* Texas students. We ask for your support in maintaining this vital pipeline to a brighter future for all Texans.

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran
National LULAC President

¹ Tony Carnevale, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, June 2010.