Testimony of the Texas Latino Education Coalition in Support of House Bill 3904 Regarding the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan, Presented Before the House Higher Education Committee, May 3, 2017

Dear Chairman Lozano and Committee Members,

Thank you for hearing our testimony today. The Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) is a collaborative of organizations that advocates for the rights of Latino students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools.

Since 1997, the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan for automatic university admission has proven to be good policy that benefits Texas cities and rural counties alike. In addition to good policy that ensures our public universities reflect the racial and economic diversity across Texas, the policy also reflects our great geographic diversity. However, the existing Top Ten Percent Plan policy does not capture students attending schools that do not, or cannot, rank order students. HB 3904 helps fill this void.

Texas is a geographically diverse state, home to large schools and very small schools. Given the range in graduating class sizes, top-achieving graduates at small schools should still benefit from automatic admission under the Top Ten Percent Plan, even when rank calculation becomes difficult or impossible. By specifically including valedictorians in automatic admission policy, HB 3904 provides a justifiable means of recognizing the top students of small graduating classes and those attending schools that have opted out of reporting class ranks.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) notes that nearly 50 percent of high schools nationwide have decided to opt-out of reporting class ranks and recommends using alternate means of class ranking to be performed in order to recognize the top-achieving students of graduating classes. Such alternate means are necessary for recognizing students, but can slow down the automatic admission process (Wermund, 2013). House Bill 3904 provides easy inclusion for top students for automatic admission and scholarships that would otherwise require ranking calculation.

Projections show that by 2020, 59 percent of jobs in Texas will require post-secondary training or education. Higher educational attainment is correlated with a state's workforce productivity, increasing wages and tax bases. Policies like HB 3904 contribute to higher education access through making sure our top students are not excluded from otherwise strong automatic admission policies. The Texas Latino Education Coalition urges you to support HB 3904.

Resources

NASSP. (March 11, 2010). "Class Rank, GPA, and Grading," position statement (Reston, Va.: National Association of Secondary School Principals). https://www.nassp.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/position-statements/class-rank-gpa-and-grading?SSO=true

Wermund, B. (August 5, 2013). "More Texas high schools ditching class rank," *Austin American-Statesman*. http://www.mystatesman.com/news/more-texas-high-schools-ditching-class-ranks/xodtDGmdyscDhm1Q6fwuOM/