Dear Chairman Creighton and the Senate Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Altheria Caldera, and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. I am testifying against SB 1091.

The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan (TTPP) provides students in the top 10% of their high school class with automatic admission to any public university in the state. Since its inception almost 25 years ago, the Top Ten Percent Plan has opened doors to high-achieving students from families with limited incomes, rural communities, and communities of color – all groups typically denied access to the flagships.

SB 1091 would cap the percentage of students who are admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan at 30%, meaning only 30% of a freshman class at any public university could be made up of Top Ten Percent Plan students. This would practically eliminate the benefits of the Top Ten Percent Plan for marginalized students. A 2020 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization, revealed that historically underserved “students gained access to more selective institutions, with increased enrollment at the flagship campus” through the Top Ten Percent Plan.

IDRA’s research and data analyses have shown that 43% of students who were admitted to the University of Texas at Austin under the Top Ten Percent Plan in 2020 were Latino students and Black students. They represent more than 2,000 students of color who worked hard in high school, met the very rigorous academic criteria of the Top Ten Percent Plan, but may not have been able to access UT-Austin were it not for the Top Ten Percent Plan.

The Top Ten Percent Plan also opens the door for students from families with limited means: Their UT-Austin admittance rate through the Plan is more than twice the rate for non-Ten Percenters. And the Top Ten Percent Plan accounts for 85% of admitted rural students at UT-Austin.

I have included with my testimony a chart showing the impact of the Top Ten Percent Plan in each of your senate districts (IDRA 2021). You will see that thousands of hard-working students in your own communities have benefited from the Top Ten Percent Plan. This bill could take away college opportunities for many more students in your districts.

Rather than further scaling back on the Top Ten Percent Plan, we urge you to explore other equitable policies to complement the Top Ten Percent Plan and support increased college
enrollment and completion. For example, we urge you to fully fund state financial aid programs for students from families with limited incomes like the TEXAS Grant program, and support SB 1709, a current bill designed to enhance student success through recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

The students who benefit most from the Top Ten Percent Plan come backgrounds like my own. They are students of color from homes that are economically disadvantaged, and they are likely to be first-generation college students. They cannot draw upon money or legacy for admission to Texas’ top institutions. They do not have fraternal connections or hidden knowledge to grant them access. The combination of hard work, academic achievement, ambition, and the Top Ten Percent Plan is their path to college acceptance. It is crucial that Texas continues to provide them this avenue to higher education.

**Recommendations**

IDRA encourages you to:

1. Maintain Texas’ Top Ten Percent Plan in its current state;
2. Incentivize institutions of higher education to increase recruitment efforts at high schools that do not have a history of sending students to these universities and adopt programs to support diverse students and faculty at their institutions;
3. Provide equitable funding to strengthen achievement at Texas’ underperforming high schools to ensure that all high school students are prepared for rigorous post-secondary education; and
4. Expand access to higher education opportunities by fully funding financial aid programs for students from families with limited incomes.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Ana Ramón, IDRA Deputy Director of Advocacy, at ana.ramon@idra.org.

**Resources**


_IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs._
Top Ten Percent Plan Expands College Access Across Texas

The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan has opened the doors of Texas’ public universities to low-income students, rural communities and communities of color — all groups who were typically denied access to many public universities, particularly the University of Texas at Austin. IDRA conducted an analysis of the entering freshman class who received automatic admission at UT-Austin during the years 2009 through 2013.

**Expansive Access**

Percentage of the Entering Freshman Class who Received Automatic Admission at UT-Austin, 2009-2013 by Texas Origin (State) and Income Level

**Background**

The Texas Legislature adopted the Top Ten Percent Plan in 1997 to ensure that a small percentage of top students from Texas high schools would have automatic admission to UT-Austin and Texas A&M University. With implementation support from and expansion from both rural and urban districts, the plan recognized that these top public university students may have parents and relatives who did not have the same educational opportunities.

Starting with the 2011 class, UT-Austin is now allowed to send these students to 75% of the freshmen class of 2014, the top 10% of students with the highest college readiness index who are admitted to UT-Austin. Since then, the percentage has been 95%.

**Impact**

The Top Ten Percent Plan has expanded higher education opportunities for students of color, students from rural communities, students from low-income families, and students whose parents did not attend college.

The plan has led to an increase in the number of students attending the University of Texas from 2003 to 2013. The table below shows the number of students admitted to UT-Austin, both at the University of Texas at Austin and at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Rural school districts in Texas have been the biggest beneficiaries of the Top Ten Percent Plan, accounting for 85% of the students from rural districts.

The plan has helped increase the number of black students admitted to the University of Texas, from 2003 to 2013. The number of black students has increased from 2,047 to 3,337.

The plan is the most successful of all the race conscious plans in Texas, offering the top 10% Plan along with 75% of all black students and 17% of Asian American students in 2010.

**The Top Ten Percent Plan accounts for 85% of admitted rural students at UT-Austin**

Students Admitted to UT-Austin through the Top Ten Percent Plan are More Diverse

Most students of color at UT-Austin are admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Admitted to UT-Austin through the Top Ten Percent Plan</th>
<th>Total number of students admitted in 2003: 9,960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83% of Latino students</td>
<td>Non Top Ten Percent Plan Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73% of Black students</td>
<td>Top Ten Percent Plan Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Top Ten Percent Plan has opened the doors of Texas’ flagship universities to students of color, students from rural communities, and students from families with limited means — all groups that have historically been denied access.**

**The Top Ten Percent Plan is the Best Chance for Students in Families with Limited Means and with Less Formal Education to Get into UT-Austin**

With the education level of parents is a huge indicator of UT-Austin admitted, students in families with less formal education are more likely to be admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Education Level</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50-08</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50-08</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or More</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information see https://idra.net/TopTen21