



HB 2554 Furthers the Inequitable Practice of Funneling Students of Color into Vocational Education

IDRA Testimony against HB 2554, presented by Altheria Caldera, Ph.D., to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 6, 2021

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the House Public 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. We respectfully oppose HB 2554.

HB 2554 proposes the establishment of joint vocational school districts that are funded by the Foundation School Plan and the operation of vocational education charter programs. This plan threatens to take Texas public education backward to a time when certain students, namely students of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, were funneled into vocational programs instead of into college preparatory pathways.

Historical tracking of Black students and Latino students into vocational programs suggests that these same populations would be tracked into this new iteration of vocational programs (Kohli, 2014; San Miguel, 2020). This threatens to create a racial tracking system that leaves students of color unprepared for college. Racial tracking inequitably presupposes that certain students are inferior to others and are therefore better suited to vocational, as opposed to academic tracks.

Vocational programs limit students' opportunities to enroll in rigorous coursework that prepares them for post-secondary education. People who hold college degrees are less likely to live in poverty than those who don't hold degrees. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on strengthening preparation for college and streamlining the secondary to post-secondary transition.

Recommendations

- Reject HB 2554 for its possible inequitable treatment of students of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Prioritize college preparation for all students, especially those from historically underserved families; and
- Maintain public governance and public funds in public schools.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., IDRA Deputy Director of Policy, at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

- Craven, M. (March 2020). President's Proposed Federal Budget Would Cut Education Funding and Programs. IDRA Newsletter. <https://idra.news/Mar20b>
- IDRA. (2020). Student Tracking Policies Weaken Curriculum, webpage. San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association. https://www.idra.org/education_policy/student-tracking-policies-weaken-curriculum/
- IDRA (2020). Preparing All Students to Succeed in College, webpage. San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association. https://www.idra.org/education_policy/preparing-all-students-to-succeed-in-college/
- Kohli, S. (November 18, 2014). Modern-Day Segregation in Public Schools. The Atlantic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/11/modern-day-segregation-in-public-schools/382846/>
- San Miguel, G. Mexican Americans and Education. Handbook of Texas Online. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/mexican-americans-and-education>
- Vasquez, B. (October 2020). College Degrees Are Worth It – People with Bachelor's Degrees Have Lower Poverty Rates. IDRA Newsletter. <https://idra.news/nlOct20b>

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.