



# Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

February, 2017

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Austin, TX

Dear XXX XXXX:

As president of the Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA), I am writing to share our Association's serious concerns with SB 18. This bill would end current designated tuition set-aside provisions designed to assist financially-needy students at Texas public institutions of higher education. These institutions continue to face serious challenges in enrolling, retaining and graduating students, especially those from historically underrepresented populations. In our view, SB 18 would seriously undermine our ability to meet these challenges.

To help ensure financially-needy students have access to a higher education, the Texas Legislature created in earlier sessions the statutory (1975) and designated (2003) tuition set-aside statutes. These provisions require public higher education institutions to set aside a portion of their tuition revenue to be used for need-based aid programs. These set-asides fund grants, scholarships and work-study programs. To be eligible for this assistance, a student must demonstrate financial need.

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), tuition set-asides provided over \$345 million in FY 2015 for need-based aid to over 207,000 students. Almost half of these students "had family incomes below the federally established poverty level for a family of four" according to the THECB's *Report on Student Financial Aid in Texas Higher Education*. This high-need group is a significant share of the population served by the State's 60x30TX higher education strategic plan. It is also important to note that the population helped through set-aside funds is often not eligible for assistance through other state aid programs such as the TEXAS Grant.

Legislation that does not guarantee through biennial appropriations a replacement of the set-aside revenue (for the same use by each campus) would be detrimental to thousands of low-income students who would lose a reliable source of student financial aid. Such a development would likely result in many financially-needy students leaving college, which would negatively affect them, the institutions of higher education they attend, and the state as a whole. Therefore, TASFAA urges that SB 18 not be enacted into law.

Thank you for your consideration. As the single statewide professional association whose members administer the state and federal student financial aid programs, our members stand prepared to, and look forward to, lending our expertise to the legislature to ensure its policy-making in this arena is informed and effective.

Sincerely,

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