



Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

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XXXXXX XX, 2017

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Dear XXXX:

On behalf of the Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA), I am writing to inform you of our serious concerns with SB 33, a bill relating to eligibility for a TEXAS Grant. Several of the bill's proposed changes to the TEXAS Grant program would impose stricter eligibility requirements on financially-needy and underrepresented student populations, thus potentially increasing barriers for these students to access a higher education.

Our Association, which represents approximately 2,000 financial aid professionals at 170 Texas institutions of higher education, believes the proposed changes could render half of their current TEXAS Grant recipients ineligible for future awards. In addition, mostly Hispanic, African-American and first-generations students would be adversely affected if this bill were to become law. The implications include:

1. Increasing course completion criterion from 24 to 30 hours would create greater hardships for disadvantaged students who may have numerous external factors affecting their low socio-economic status that would likely prevent them from meeting this requirement during the fall and spring terms.
2. The higher course completion criterion would result in some low-income students having to enroll in summer school to meet the 30 hours requirement, thus potentially forcing many to incur additional loan debt for summer educational expenses in order to remain TEXAS Grant eligible. At some institutions that additional loan burden would be greater than the value of their annual TEXAS Grant award.
3. Lowering the maximum attempted hours requirement from 150 to 135 hours would also be to the detriment of financially-needy students. The harsher criterion would preclude the opportunity for some to recover from a "shaky" academic start even though they are making progress toward graduation.

These are just several of the concerns expressed by our Association's members regarding Senate Bill 33, but they demonstrate some of the additional barriers that would be faced by our state's underrepresented students (some of whom must work to help support their families while attending college). We also note that the TEXAS Grant criteria are already stricter than those for most federal student aid programs.

We ask that you consider the negative implications associated with Senate Bill 33 and its potential impact on students from historically underrepresented populations. 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 in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Alan David Ahmad
President, TASFAAA 2016-2017
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