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CREEED
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Senate Education Committee

- Thank you, Chairman Taylor. It is an honor to be here today to talk with the Education Committee about the twin proposals—HB 3 and SB 4—that you and Chairman Huberty have introduced this legislative session to address school finance reform. These reforms are long overdue, and over the coming years they will make a tremendous difference for millions of young Texans, including many from my hometown of El Paso.
- The progress reflected in both bills is commendable and we support these efforts. I especially want to emphasize the strategic direction of the proposals towards outcomes and incentives, which represents a major and important shift in public school finance funding for Texas.
- I am here today representing an El Paso-based organization of predominantly Hispanic business and professional leaders, the Council on Economic Expansion and Educational Development, or CREEED. We focus on improving the educational attainment levels of students in public k-12 schools, because we have concluded this is the key to economic expansion and competitive development in our region.
- In working with the local ISDs in the El Paso area, CREEED has focused on expanding the number of high -performing seats in public education. High Performing Seats set a strategic objective to assess outcomes confirming the success of public education.
- When we expand the number of high performing seats, we expand the number of high school seniors who graduate college-ready - that is, able to complete their post-secondary education, including earning a Bachelor’s degree, without remediation and within 6 years of their matriculation.
- This is a worthy goal, and one that deserves additional funding.
- By now, we all know that 21st century jobs—especially well-paying ones that ensure economic mobility—require postsecondary training. You need more than a high school diploma for more than half of the new positions being created today.

- These are the jobs that our communities want to attract and retain. They bring security, stability, and prosperity, and they help grow the tax base.
- In Texas specifically, we are not producing nearly enough college graduates with the skills and educational training that employers need. CREEED Board Chairman Richard Castro recently wrote a column in the *Texas Tribune* that reviews our state's disappointing performance when it comes to student attainment.
- More than half of Texas graduates who go on to college will require remediation. And while 54 % of students who started eighth grade in a Texas public high school do eventually enroll in a two or four-year college program, only 23 % of our young people will actually earn degrees within six years of high school graduation.
- For El Paso-based eighth graders, that percentage of completion is just 19%.
- To learn that we were losing that many eighth graders before college, and then again before college graduation, was shocking to us. It is unacceptable, and we know it cannot continue.
- These dismal statistics are a call for action, meaningful and strategic action.
- SB 4 reflects the emphasis on outcomes-based public-school funding that the School Finance Commission included in its recommendations. This strategic focus will help Texas and communities like El Paso elevate their expectations and improve their trajectory of educational attainment.
- The funding incentives that the bill provides for Economically Disadvantaged districts -- districts that include all El Paso-based school districts create sensible baselines, allowing any improvement to be notable and recognizable.
- We at CREEED also support giving local school districts resources and incentives to radically improve the outcomes of all students in the system and increase the number of High Performing Seats.
- Strategic compensation for teachers complements the other outcome-based strategic funding provisions. It is a key component in the push to address the persistent achievement gaps.
- Done well, pay incentives are practical, targeted, and should give the local school districts latitude in ensuring high quality education is a reality for all students and schools within a public school district.
- We support this concept and urge this Committee to work to incorporate it in the final legislation that comes from the efforts reflected in HB3 and SB4.

- There are many other things to like in the proposed legislation. Early education and literacy, career and technical education, and college and career readiness are all areas that we should be focusing on more, and these bills begin to address that.
- We need to be sure, however, that State Funding is allocated to accomplish them.
- School finance reform is long overdue in Texas. These proposals make smart investments in Texas's future. They are also strategic in that they incorporate outcomes-based funding and the targeted compensation incentives. I hope you will all support them.