



Testimony

SB 1615

Testimony Before the Senate Education Committee

by Erin Davis Valdez

Chairman Taylor, Vice Chairman Lucio, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Erin Davis Valdez, and I am a policy analyst for career and technical education and workforce development at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1615.

- The relationship between a lack of a high school diploma and involvement in the criminal justice system is well-established. As of 2007, [more than 80% of Texas adult prison inmates were high school dropouts](#). Fourteen years later, data on citizens leaving the Texas Department of Criminal Justice show that a little [under 19% had a high school diploma or GED](#) (author's calculations).
- In addition, in 2018, the quarterly wages of high school graduates, ages 25-30, was 38% higher than those of non-graduates (data drawn from Texas Public Education Information Resource and based on author's calculations).
- Many Texans are still struggling with unemployment or underemployment in the wake of COVID, especially those in industries such as [hospitality and leisure](#).

This bill goes one step beyond simply bringing a high school diploma within reach of many adult students; it provides them the opportunity to earn an industry certification simultaneously.

Industry certifications can provide a critical bridge into higher-wage work, but because [not all industry certifications are created equal](#), we are especially pleased to see the inclusion of longitudinal wage growth within the accountability measures that this bill puts into place for this new framework for adult learners.

TPPF research reveals that [aligning career and technical education with wage outcomes](#) can lead to more effective allocations of scarce taxpayer resources, more innovative programs, and more success for students.

Adult learners have unique circumstances, and this bill creates a unique accountability framework that will give them the tools they need for success, not only for themselves, but for the next generation of Texans. ★

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erin Davis Valdez is a policy analyst for the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Right on Work initiative. Valdez conducts research on career and technical education at the secondary and post-secondary levels, civics education, and welfare-to-work programs in Texas.

About Texas Public Policy Foundation

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