

# Testimony

## SB 2005

### Fast Track to Employment

#### Testimony in Support of SB 2005 Submitted to the Texas Senate Committee on Higher Education

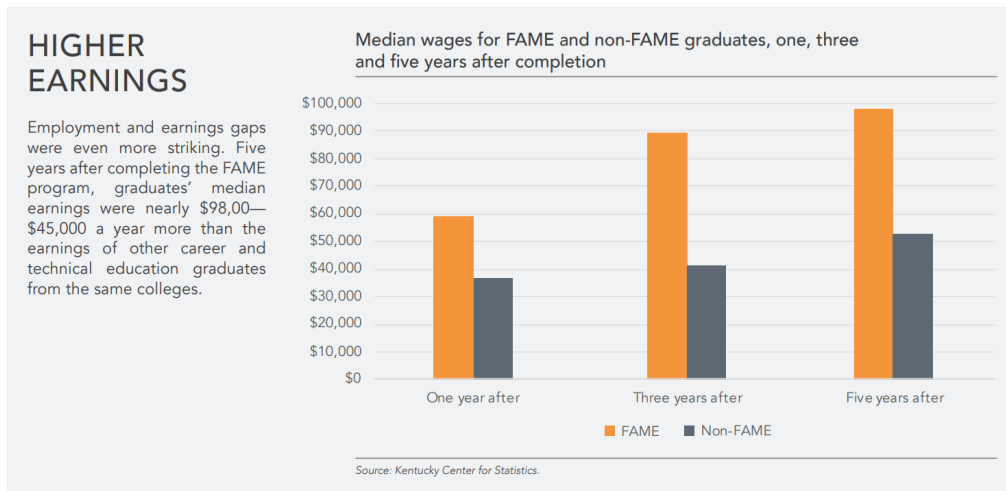
by Erin Davis Valdez, Policy Analyst

Chairman Creighton, Vice Chairman West, 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 2005.

As the trickle of [businesses relocating to Texas](#) becomes a flood, it is vitally important for policymakers to consider how to make hiring the existing Texas workforce more attractive to employers than importing workers, who may not share Texas values, from other states. Texans still suffering [COVID-related unemployment](#) in the hard-hit service sector could benefit from reskilling to fill specialized roles in IT, manufacturing, construction, and healthcare.

In addition, after the significant damages recently caused by Winter Storm Uri, the [shortage of skilled tradespeople](#)—such as plumbers—has become an urgent matter of public policy.



To close this middle skills gap, employer-driven workforce education shows great promise. One example of what is possible comes from the success of the Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (KY FAME) apprenticeship model. According to a recent Brookings Institution and Opportunity America report, 5 years post-graduation, FAME [students' median earnings were \\$96,098](#), compared with non-FAME graduates' median earnings of \$36,437.

Source: [Opportunity America](#), [Kentucky FAME](#)

In order for Texas to live up to its reputation as a business-friendly state, as well as to protect its liberties and prosperity in the long term, employers need to be able to develop the talents of Texans within their communities quickly and effectively.

I appreciate this committee's leadership on better aligning education and workforce demand and its focus on employment outcomes. SB 2005 is an important step toward improving the economic opportunities for all Texans, addressing the need for the state to have a skilled workforce, and providing an attractive policy environment for current and future employers. ★

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Erin Davis Valdez** is a policy analyst with Right on Work at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. She has been passionate about the transformational power of education all her life, having been given the gift of being homeschooled. She taught for over a decade in Austin-area schools and served as an assistant principal at a charter school in Lewisville. These experiences have given her the opportunity to see first-hand how students can thrive when they have excellent options.

Since joining the Foundation, Valdez has conducted research on career and technical education at the secondary and post-secondary levels, civics education, and welfare to work programs in Texas.

Valdez earned an MA in classics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a BA in classical studies from Hillsdale College.

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