



Testimony

HB 1032

Paid Apprenticeships for High School Students

*Testimony in Support of HB 1032
Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee*

by Richard Johnson, Ed.D.

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

My name is Dr. Richard Johnson, and I am the director of the Booker T. Washington Initiative at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1032.

COVID-19 Impacts on Workforce

As Texas recovers from the COVID-19 economic and health consequences, it is imperative that all students have access to career and technical education that will prepare them for high-wage, high-demand occupations that exist now and that are emerging.

According to the January 2021 Texas Labor Market Review, [unemployment among young people 16-19 is up to 18%](#), compared with 13% in January 2020. We know that a first job is a crucial first step toward future economic mobility. [According to the Aspen Institute](#),

Youth unemployment can have lasting consequences – repressed wages, decreased upward mobility, and lessened productivity over a person’s work life. In particular, this is true for young people of color, who are often combating systemic barriers that limit their access to jobs – and which can contribute to setting them up for disparities later in life.

HB 1032 addresses the need for students of all economic backgrounds to have [access to paid internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning experiences](#).

Winter Storm Uri Highlights Skilled Trades Gap

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

[According to the Texas Tribune](#) (February 26, 2021),

A shortage of skilled trade workers—plumbers, electricians and the like—has been growing in the state for the past decade, and that is exacerbating problems for those seeking help with broken pipes and damaged water heaters.

Recent data released by the Texas Education Agency drives home this point. [Of 80,286 students who completed a career and technology education program](#) of study in 2018-19, ONLY:

- 0.15% (or 120 students) were in HVAC and sheet metal,
- 0.13% (or 101 students) were in plumbing and pipefitting,
- 0.24% (or 194 students) were in electrical,
- 0.72% (or 580 students) were in welding, and
- 0.69% (or 552 students) were in IT support and services.

HB 1032 addresses this skilled trade gap in part by expanding the number of employers who are willing and able to offer placements for paid internships and apprenticeships. Local contractors and others in the skilled trades are often small businesses that do not have robust, existing internship programs but may be willing to take on a few students per semester with support from intermediaries that specialize in job-matching and administrative assistance.

The bill would allow school districts to use a portion of their CTE allotment to identify and contract with regional non-profit organizations, such as chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, or industry or civic associations to provide services to employers to match them with eligible CTE students for the purpose of providing students paid work-based learning opportunities. The bill would allow nonprofits selected by school districts to set up reimbursement for on-the-job training or matching funds for employers willing to place students in paid internships or apprenticeships.

Working with employers of all sizes to increase the number of paid, work-based learning opportunities for students is an important way that school districts can use their CTE funding to help students get a head start on high-wage, high-demand careers.

I appreciate your work and look forward to helping improve the economic opportunities of all young Texans and address the needs of Texas to have a skilled workforce. HB 1032 would help to better align secondary CTE offerings with workforce demand. ★

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Richard A. Johnson, Ed.D., is the director of the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Booker T. Washington Initiative, which examines the effects of public policy on African-American communities.

Previously, Johnson served as a chief of staff in both municipal and state governments. As chief of staff for a Houston City Council member, he played a significant role in drafting and navigating policies related to public safety, public works, and housing and community development. During the 85th and 86th Texas Legislatures, he served as a chief of staff and a senior policy analyst for a House member and worked on education, public safety, healthcare, and workforce development legislation.

An educator for more than 20 years, Johnson has extensive experience in teaching and research. He worked as a research assistant at the University of Texas Mental Science Institute, studying the efficacy of counseling and pharmacological therapy on cocaine and heroin addicts. He began counseling inner-city adolescent males and founded an academy for troubled boys which provided education, discipline, and residential substance abuse treatment. In 2007 he began teaching and researching in the areas of psychology and academic performance.

Johnson was the president of the Louisiana Prison Chapel Foundation for nearly two decades, building more than 20 churches inside prison walls. In addition, Johnson served as the co-founder and second president of 100 Black Men Metropolitan Houston, vice president of development for 100 Black Men San Antonio, and co-chair of the education committee of the NAACP, Houston.

Johnson served in the U.S. Army after college, obtaining the rank of sergeant. He was selected to play for the All-Army basketball team.

A Texas native, Johnson has an Ed.D. in education administration and an M.A. in clinical psychology from Texas Southern University. He received a B.A. in history and government from Wiley College.

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