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Mission:

**To make Legislative
recommendations to help
the Texas Border Region
grow and prosper
economically.**



TESTIMONY

Presented by
The Texas Border Coalition
To the
Texas House Committee on Public Education
81st Texas Legislature

March 24, 2009

Chairman Eissler and committee members, the Texas Border Coalition (TBC) represents the collective voice of Texas border mayors, county judges and communities on issues that affect the Texas-Mexico border regional quality of life. We support economic development opportunities and sustainable incomes in a healthy and safe environment, the flow of goods and products between Texas and Mexico, and investments and incentives in transportation, immigration, ports of entry, workforce, education, healthcare and other areas vital to the fulfillment of our mission.

TBC strongly supports Rep. Guillen's HB 636, which would help our state reach more undereducated adults (persons over 16 not currently enrolled, with no high school diploma or GED) who need basic English literacy and math skills to participate constructively in the 21st century economy.

The Workforce and Education Committee of TBC has consistently supported increased funding for Adult Basic Education (ABE), including testimony before the Texas House Select Committee on Public and Higher Education on May 9, 2008.

As laid out in HB 636, TBC strongly recommends that ABE funding to counties be based primarily on need rather than on contact hours. TBC supports a \$15 million "hold harmless" provision to ensure that no existing ABE programs would lose funding under the new formula.

TBC recommends that in apportioning ABE grants, TEA look at basic skill needs and address the basic education level first in order to impact the largest population with the greatest need.

TBC fully supports TEA's request for \$50 million for ABE in the 2009-2010 biennium.

In addition, TBC makes the following general recommendations regarding TEA and access to ABE programs for undereducated adults:

TBC recommends that Texas match Federal funds on a consistent basis to draw down the greatest possible Federal funding for Texas.

TBC recommends that TEA ensure that the ABE program equips students with the workplace literacy skills required to be a productive member of society.

TBC recommends that TEA use a more performance-driven approach, accountable to students and the business community.

TBC recognizes that ABE is a major issue in our state's economy. Therefore, TBC recommends that ABE incorporate current technology education.

TBC recognizes the critical role community colleges play in facilitating ABE in the local communities at a competitive price.

TBC supports TEA's efforts to increase ABE funding, effectiveness and efficiency because TBC knows that businesses are drawn to areas where the workforce can provide capable and trained workers.

SUMMARY

Texas's leadership role in our national economy rests in our ability to educate and train our workforce. TBC fully understands that there must be an increase in developing and enhancing a skilled workforce and a reduction in student dropouts. To meet these goals, we must focus on having the capacity to successfully compete in the global economy and ensure economic prosperity. We must eliminate the gaps that separate our able and competent workers from skills-deficient workers. TBC supports funding and other initiatives to ensure that we create and sustain a globally competitive workforce with access to a viable and efficient ABE program in every county in the great State of Texas.

Finally, TBC stands behind TEA in its mission to have a more adequate and fully funded ABE program to meet the educational and economic needs of Texas residents.

TBC thanks you today for allowing us to address the border's greatest asset – our citizens and the Texas businesses that they impact.