



Senate Committee on Higher Education

Attn: The Honorable Senator Creighton, Chair

Capitol Station

Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Written Testimony Against SB 17 on April 6th, 2023

Dear Senator Creighton and Members of the Committee. *My name is Victoria Uriostegui and I am a student at the University of Texas at Austin pursuing a bachelor in science in Communication and Leadership and minors in Mexican American Latina/o Studies and Government. I'm also a student coordinator for Breakthrough Central Texas Advocacy Fellows. I am here to speak against SB 17 on behalf of Texas college students and future leaders.*

We want students in Texas who have been historically underrepresented from college campuses to feel welcomed and supported to excel academically, socially, and in their future careers. That can't happen without programs that target students of diverse backgrounds alongside appropriate and effective training for staff and faculty to build skills and competencies to better serve them. This bill does the opposite and brings about a harmful chilling effect for students, faculty, and administrators across Texas college campuses. It sends the message to students like me that our state government does not want to support the college and career success of all Texans and is willing to see our talents go to waste.

*I am **against** SB 17 because, as a first-generation college student and the daughter of immigrants, I have relied heavily on identity-based programs to navigate college life. Because I am the first in my family to go to college, there are sometimes situations and questions I can't go to my parents for because they do not have the experience with them. I have found comfort with trained staff whose expertise and skill provide a space for me and have helped me not feel alone. They give me the tailored resources I need.*

This bill would jeopardize the chance for students like me to adjust to and thrive on college campuses where we have long been underrepresented, disturb our engagement in classrooms, and ultimately harm our competitiveness in the job market. Had it not been for the cultural social events and first-generation workshops I attended in my first year at UT, I would have struggled to adapt on campus. These programs create an inclusive campus culture that is especially needed when certain classrooms do not include many who look like me. In addition, while the removal of DEI on campuses has been called a cost-saving measure by some, the reality is that staff increase efficiency by eliminating time wasted searching for resources and seeking guidance so we can focus our energy on being students. Lastly, the prohibition of DEI staff and initiatives will disadvantage all of us in the growing and diverse global workforce. While companies move forward, our state seems to be moving backwards. Studies covered in my

Communication and Leadership courses continuously show that diverse work groups perform better and we need to equip students to be able to work collaboratively.

I urge you to vote against SB 17 *to ensure our state welcomes all students now and in the future and continue having wonderful staff supporting us. Thank you for the opportunity to speak for students and share why **diversity, equity, and inclusion programs** are necessary to students across Texas.*

Sincerely,
Victoria Uriostegui