



Testimony

HB 1032

Paid Apprenticeships for High School Students

Testimony in support of HB 1032 submitted to the Texas House Committee on International Relations and Economic Development

by Erin Davis Valdez, Policy Analyst

Chairwoman Button 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 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 damages 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.

[Data released](#) by the Texas Education Agency on March 9, 2021, sheds some light on a possible origin of this skilled trade gap: Of 82,076 students who completed a career and technology education program of study in 2018-19, only 123 were in HVAC and sheet metal (or 0.1%), 103 were in plumbing and pipefitting (or 0.1%), and 196 were in electrical (or 0.2%).*

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.

* Author’s calculations.

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 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. ★



Erin Davis Valdez

Erin Davis Valdez is a policy analyst for the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Right on Work initiative. 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 classics from Hillsdale College.

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