



# Testimony

## House Bill 1859

### Presented to the Texas House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures

By Jorge Antonio Borrego

#### Chairman King and Members of the Committee:

I am Jorge Borrego, postsecondary analyst for Next Generation Texas at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and I am testifying in support of HB 1859. I would like to thank the members of this committee for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1859. The Foundation recently conducted [research](#) examining the state of career and technical education in Texas public schools. What we found was that there are large gaps between workforce needs and programs of study across multiple sectors but in particular the skilled trades, such as electricians and HVAC technicians.

Currently, Texas is witnessing a growing demand for skilled workers with many regions of the state facing a shortage. This is especially true for air conditioning and refrigeration technicians in rural communities, where summer-time service calls can go unfilled for several days. Urban communities are not immune either, as businesses in several metropolitan areas struggle to employ enough technicians to meet demand. The average age of these technicians is well above 40. As our economy continues to attract more residents and businesses and as these technicians begin to retire, the industry workforce gap will only exacerbate. By our estimates, Texas will be short approximately 4,000 HVAC technicians by 2030.

In 2019, there were only 123 students who completed a program of study in HVAC and sheet metal. In 2021, less than 2,700 individuals completed an apprenticeship in a skilled trade in Texas. One of the reasons we believe that there is a shortage of completers in these programs is that the barrier of entry to becoming a licensed air conditioning technician is too high. Under the current statute, a person must complete at least 2,000 hours of on-the-job training to become licensed. This equates to 250 eight-hour workdays or almost a year's worth of work. This on-the-job training often comes at a reduced or no wage. The Foundation supports HB 1859 as it seeks to create an alternative path to licensure by allowing the successful completion of a career and technology education program.

We ask that you favorably report HB 1859 out of committee. Thank you for your time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

