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State of Texas
House of Representatives
SYLVESTER TURNER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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October 21, 2004

Senator Florence Shapiro
Capitol
3E-2
Austin, Texas

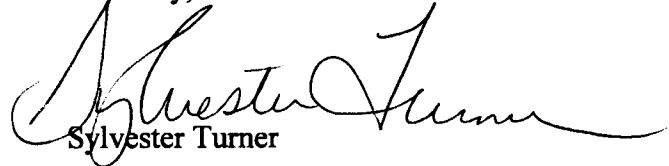
Representative Geanie Morrison
Capitol
E2-904
Austin, Texas

RE: Higher Education Joint Committee/Recommendation on Article 8

Dear Committee Chairs:

In reference to Article 8 , I disagree with recommendation 1 (one) and 2 (two), in terms of including all Universities within a University System. I do and can agree with coordinating boards looking at ways for improving an existing system, but not eliminate the few remaining independent colleges and place them within an existing system. I fully support the remaining Articles.

Sincerely,



Sylvester Turner

ST:pdw
attached to report



The Senate of The State of Texas

SENATE COMMITTEES:

CHAIRMAN
Subcommittee on Higher Education

VICE CHAIRMAN
Education

MEMBER
Finance
Health and Human Services
Jurisprudence

Senator Royce West
District 23

October 18, 2004

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The Honorable Florence Shapiro, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education
Capitol, Room 3E.2

The Honorable Geanie Morrison, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education
Capitol Extension, Room E2.904

Dear Chair Shapiro and Chair Morrison:

Thank you for your leadership during the 78th Interim as co-chairs of the Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education. Although I will sign the final Report to the Legislature as an endorsement of this committee's hard work and the many strong recommendations upon which we agree, I regret that I cannot support all of the draft recommendations.

Specifically, I am opposed to the following recommendations:

Charge #6. Recommendation #1: In its biennial appropriation of formula funding for higher education, the legislature should adopt a matrix that reflects a blend of the actual cost of the full funding formula with historical funding levels that retain legislative incentives.

This recommendation appears to be a tacit endorsement of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's recommendation to adopt a cost-based methodology for determining the relative weights in the Instruction and Operations (I & O) matrix. While I support a cost-based methodology in principle, I do not want my vote for the committee's recommendation to be perceived as support for the Coordinating Board's recommendation. Although the Coordinating Board recommended phasing in this methodology over several biennia, preventing any institution from receiving greater than a three percent loss in I&O formula funding this biennium, this recommendation would still result in devastating losses for Texas Woman's University and Texas Southern University.



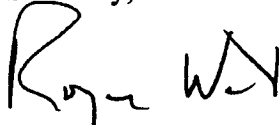
Chair Florence Shapiro and Chair Geanie Morrison
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October 15, 2004

Charge #6. Recommendation #6: The Legislature should make changes to tuition and fee flexibility granted to community college districts to set differential tuition, and clarify their authority for assessing fees, similar to the complete authority granted to public universities.

The Legislature granted the authority to set differential tuition to general academic institutions beginning with the 2003 fall semester. This authority should not be extended to community colleges until a full assessment has been made of the impact of this change at four-year institutions.

If these two recommendations are included in the final report, please include this letter as a record of my dissent. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I look forward to working with both of you on higher education issues during the 79th Legislative Session.

Sincerely,



Senator Royce West

RW/cs



Judith Zaffirini

State Senator, District 21
President Pro Tempore, 1997

Committees
Finance, Vice Chair
Education
Health and Human Services

Committees
International Relations and Trade
Legislative Budget Board

October 25, 2004

Senator Florence Shapiro, Co-Chair
Representative Geannie Morrison, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education
Texas Legislature
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chair Shapiro and Chair Morrison:

Thank you for your hard work as Co-Chairs of the Joint Interim Committee on Higher Education. It was my privilege to serve with you, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective regarding the Interim Committee report. Although the committee has offered many fine recommendations to improve higher education in Texas, I respectfully decline the opportunity to sign the final report for several reasons, some of which I articulate in this letter.

First and foremost, I disagree with the committee's recommendation that the legislature award TEXAS Grants to eligible students during their first two years of college and use the B-On-Time Student Loan Program to provide assistance during their upper-division undergraduate years. When I authored and passed SB 4, which established the B-On-Time Student Loan Program, the intent was to reward any student who is graduated timely. This serves two important goals. First, it improves the four-year graduation rates of our universities, thus making available scarce resources for other deserving students. Second, it provides much needed financial relief to families struggling with the cost of higher education.

The committee's proposal to package B-On-Time loans with TEXAS Grants is inconsistent with the legislative intent of SB 4. Timely graduation provisions are not part of TEXAS Grants' eligibility requirements, and, presumably, under the

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Letter to Chair Shapiro and Chair Morrison

October 25, 2004

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committee's proposal only students who first received TEXAS Grants would be awarded B-On-Time loans.

The committee's recommendation may be motivated by budgetary considerations, but may hinder our ability to achieve the goals of *Closing the Gap*. Our priority should not be to limit funding for higher education and student financial aid programs, but to find ways to increase such funding so that more students have access to an affordable, quality education.

Second, I oppose the provisions that potentially may affect the structure and function of our university systems. In 1985 the Select Committee on Higher Education caused great consternation, then fizzled. Many of us have worked hard to decentralize our systems so that more Texans can pursue their education. This recommendation may cause similar grief and distract educators from their tasks at hand. Each university system plays a unique role in carrying out the state's mission of providing a high quality education. Given the geographical and ethnic diversity of the state, the various educational needs of Texas students are served best by the current university systems structure.

Although I attended every meeting of our joint committee, I do not recall hearing any compelling testimony that would result in these recommendations.

Thank you for your dedication to these important issues. Higher education is my passion, and you can count on my continued leadership to improve it statewide. Similarly, I appreciate your continued efforts to improve higher education in Texas.

May God bless you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Zaffirini".

Judith Zaffirini, PhD

JZ/wve