

May 8, 2023

Thank you Chairman Kuempel. My name is Patrick Smith and I am speaking for myself as a private individual. I am a member of the Texas Faculty Association and I am here in opposition to SB 17.

I am a professor at Texas State University, a Hispanic Serving Institution and one of the largest teacher preparation programs in Texas. My students are future Bilingual and ESL educators studying to become elementary and middle school teachers. As is well known, Texas is facing a critical teacher shortage. Nearly one in five school children in Texas lives in a home where a language other than English is spoken. As the number of emergent bilingual students in our state continues to grow, the teacher shortage is especially acute in the area of Bilingual Education.

School districts across our state recognize that the bilingual teacher shortage is negatively impacting their ability to deliver high quality education to English language learners. To attract certified bilingual teachers, districts are paying annual stipends of between \$4,000-\$6,000. This is the case in Guadalupe County where I live; in Hays County, where I teach; and in Bexar, Caldwell, Comal, Gonzalez, Williamson, and Harris counties, where many of my university students come from.

The legislation proposed in SB 17 would undermine our ability to attract and prepare the kinds of teachers that Texas schools need. Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of what Bilingual and ESL teachers must learn in order to become effective teachers. My students, most of whom are women of Mexican American backgrounds, benefit from university programs and services that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. They benefit from state funding, federal grants, and student scholarships that require and support equity and diversity. They benefit from university courses and programs of study that prepare

teachers to work effectively with linguistically and culturally diverse students, families, and communities. And they benefit from studying with professors of diverse racial, national, and linguistic backgrounds. All of these benefits would be reduced or eliminated if SB 17 becomes law.

By removing these vital services, SB 17 will discourage students from becoming bilingual teachers. I teach a course called “Education and Equity in a Diverse Society,” where first-year students learn about issues of race, ethnicity, gender, language, socioeconomic status, neurodiversity, and disability. We study how these issues impact teaching and learning for all children in Texas schools. This semester I have learned that students considering a career as bilingual teachers are feeling intimidated by the potential loss of diversity, equity, and inclusion services under SB 17. They want to know if bilingual educators are still wanted in our state.

Ultimately, it is the school children of Texas who will suffer most if SB 17 is becomes law. I urge you to support future teachers and their emergent bilingual students by voting against this harmful legislation.