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Press Statement

Bill to Expand College Access in Texas Passes House, Heads to Governor's Desk for Signature

AUSTIN – Today, the Texas House passed Senator Eckhardt's SB365, a bill to shorten the wait for Texans returning to the classroom to jumpstart their academic journeys. Currently, Texas law allows public four-year institutions and trade schools to waive academic records older than ten years. Senator Eckhardt's bill would shorten that window to just five years, ensuring that old academic records don't cast as long of a shadow on future prospects for Texans enrolling later in life. **SB365 received overwhelming bipartisan support**, passing unanimously out of the Senate Higher Education Committee, receiving a 30-1 vote on the Senate floor, and 137 affirmative votes in the House, where it was carried by **Representative Donna Howard as HB1330.**

Senator Eckhardt released the following statement about SB365's passage:

"I'm thrilled SB365 is headed to the Governor's desk. I brought this legislation with my constituents in mind, constituents like Daniel Arevalo. In the time between his first enrollment to college and re-enrollment, Daniel entered the workforce, gaining skills and adding to our shared prosperity as a mechanic, a job he enjoyed but which was never his final destination. With encouragement from his friends and family, he enrolled in ACC ready to succeed with a clearer sense of his own goals and ambitions.

"He was unable to transfer his success as a Riverbat to a four year degree, however, because of the long lookback period. With so many barriers already raised to attending college, an old transcript shouldn't be another one. **This bill is about increasing opportunity for more Texans, unlocking greater prosperity for us all through the greatest vehicle our democracy has ever created to do so: public education.**"

Representative Howard also praised the passage of the bill:

"I'm proud to see SB365—the Senate companion to HB1330—pass both chambers with broad bipartisan support! This bill enhances Texas's academic fresh start policy, giving returning students the opportunity to move forward without being held back by coursework that no longer reflects who they are today. **As a state, we benefit when we remove unnecessary barriers and open the doors of higher education to more Texans, like our constituent, Daniel Arevalo.** This legislation is a smart, compassionate step toward building a more accessible and equitable path to a degree and I could not be more proud to have worked on this alongside Senator Eckhardt."

Sarah Eckhardt



Texas State Senator

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Sarah Eckhardt is the third-term Democratic State Senator representing District 14, comprising Austin and surrounding areas. She serves on the Administration, Border Security, Nominations, and Veterans Affairs committees in the 89th Legislative Session, and has previously served on the Water, Agriculture, & Rural Affairs and Local Government committees. A proud UT Law and Public Affairs alum, Senator Eckhardt was the first woman to serve as Travis County Judge from 2014-2020.

Representative Donna Howard has served in the Texas House of Representatives since 2006. She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of Article II in the House Appropriations Committee and as Vice Chair of the Higher Education Committee. Rep. Howard also serves as the Chairwoman of the Texas Women's Health Caucus which is the largest caucus in the country solely focused on advancing women's health policy. She is an Austin native and Longhorn, holding a Bachelor's degree in nursing and Master's in health education from the University of Texas. Representative Howard was married to attorney Derek Howard for 40 wonderful years and they proudly raised three children together. Rep. Howard is also a grandmother to seven perfect grandchildren.

