Testimony for the State Board of Education Hearing on the Proposed “Mexican American Heritage” Textbook

Presented by Brianna Dimas, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, before the Texas State Board of Education, September 13, 2016

TLEC is a collaborative of organizations and individuals who advocate for the rights of Latino students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus specifically on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools.

The Texas Latino Education Coalition strongly recommends the rejection of “Mexican American Heritage,” a book so plagued with factual errors and offensive statements that it has no place in any Texas classroom.

The factual errors and omissions undermine the book’s ability to meet TEKS standards. The authors mostly fail to address the complex diversity of experience in Mexican American communities and miss opportunities to prepare students to become critical thinkers in preparation for college and life in a multifaceted global society.

We are not alone in this assessment. We support the petition which has collected over 10,000 signatures calling for the book’s rejection. TLEC is comprised of more than 15 business and education organizations, including: the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and many other advocacy groups.

It has been proven that Latino students thrive in an academic environment where ethnic studies are taught.¹ Minority students with ethnic studies in their classrooms had higher GPAs, higher graduation rates, and higher attendance rates.¹ When students are given racist, inaccurate resources, it hurts their learning potential.

We have also noted many factual errors in the textbook. For example, the text often confuses Mexican Americans with immigrants, Mexicans with other Latin Americans and, rather than including a historically-grounded discussion on the contributions of Mexican Americans, the book

makes extensive use of stereotypes including describing Mexicans as “lazy” and “not reared to put in a full day’s work so vigorously” (p. 248) and states that “drinking on the job” was a frequent problem. Other sections claim that “Chicanos…adopted a revolutionary narrative that opposed Western civilization and wanted to destroy this society” (p.415).

The Texas Latino Education Coalition also calls upon Mexican American Studies professors, scholars, and experts to be the authors of such textbooks as these. Cynthia Dunbar, one of the authors of this textbook, does not have a background in Mexican American Studies. She also has a long history of including politically right-wing agenda items in her textbooks, and we believe that hidden political agendas have no place in Texas public school classrooms. Our teachers and students deserve more. This textbook has no place in our classrooms.

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