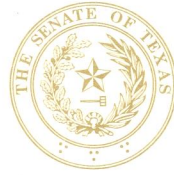


Senator Judith Zaffirini, Chair
Senator Brian Birdwell, Vice Chair



Senator Robert Duncan
Senator Joan Huffman
Senator Kirk Watson
Senator Jeff Wentworth
Senator Royce West

Senate Higher Education Committee

April 17, 2012

Fred Heldenfels, IV, Chair
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
1200 E. Anderson Lane
Austin, TX 78752

Dear Chair Heldenfels:

This is to express opposition regarding the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Agenda Item VIII-J, *relating to a request from American University of the Caribbean for a Certificate of Authority to offer courses in Texas leading to a medical degree.*

As you have heard me articulate throughout the years, my goal is for Texas to have enough clinical rotation positions for all of our medical school students, plus 20 percent for students from beyond our boundaries. Texas medical students must be prioritized, and we should ensure that all third- and fourth-year students at Texas medical schools have access to participate in clinical rotations. If we achieved this goal, we might consider allowing students from foreign medical schools to participate in clinical rotations.

Texas higher education leaders have expressed significant concern that allowing foreign medical schools to participate in third- and fourth-year clinical rotations in Texas would fill positions that otherwise would be filled by students from Texas schools. What's more, granting a Certificate of Authority to American University of the Caribbean would set a precedent, establishing an expectation that the Coordinating Board would grant future requests from similarly situated foreign institutions. Preliminary information from other states indicates that, once foreign institutions are allowed to provide third- and fourth-year clinical training, students from publicly funded medical schools may lose access to critical rotation slots.

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Similarly, allowing a foreign institution to participate in third- and fourth-year clinical rotations may undermine current efforts by Texas medical schools to expand their enrollment.

An additional issue raised relates to the statutory authority of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) and the legislative intent underpinning that authority, specifically, as it relates to the granting of Certificates of Authority to foreign medical schools. The Texas Legislature may never have intended to authorize the HECB to allow foreign medical schools to participate in third- and fourth-year clinical rotations at Texas hospitals.

Please know that as Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee and Co-Chair of the Joint Oversight Committee of Higher Education Governance, Excellence, and Transparency, I oppose Agenda Item VIII-J and request that you do not take action, but, rather, allow the Texas Legislature to consider it when we convene on January 8, 2013.

May God bless you and inspire you to agree with my perspective. If you do not, please contact me so that we can discuss this issue.

Very truly yours,



Judith Zaffirini, PhD

JZ/rm

XC: Members, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Raymund Paredes, PhD, Commissioner