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President/CEO

The Hon. Van Taylor  
Texas State Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
E 1.708  
Austin, Texas 78701  
Sent via e-mail to van.taylor@senate.texas.gov

February 6, 2017

Dear Senator Taylor:

As you are aware, the Plano Chamber of Commerce is comprised of 1,200 businesses, representing more than 160,000 employees in our area. Our mission is to maximize business development and economic growth through advocacy, education, innovation, and collaboration. We strive to be a resource for our booming business community and an advocate for the elements of the region that make our area so desirable for businesses and residents. As a result, we must express our concern for the proposed Senate budget bill (SB1) that removes nearly all special item funding for universities.

Our two institutions for higher education, The University of Texas at Dallas (UT – Dallas) and The Collin County Community College District (CCCCD), are essential components to the business environment in Plano. These institutions offer our citizens access to higher skills, degrees, and certificates that make them valuable employees and business owners throughout the area.

SB 1 would eliminate all existing special items at UT Dallas. This would constitute a reduction in state funding to the University in the amount of \$5,898,490, which would cut critical programs such as the successful Academic Bridge Program, which enables the University to admit some very bright students – but ones who may not have scored so well on standardized tests – to the highly-competitive environment of UT Dallas. With ample on-campus support, coaching from faculty, and peer-to-peer mentoring, the University has had great success retaining and graduating this diverse group of students. Another critical special item program that would be cut is the Middle School Brain Years initiative, which has impacted the lives of 50,000 Texas middle school students since 2009. Quantified results show improved standardized test scores, student reasoning ability, and grade performance as a direct result of this program.

For CCCCDC, SB 1 would reduce state funding in the amount of \$30.8 million for all community college districts. One of the items at risk in Collin County would be the Collin Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which serves as a resource to many of our small business members in Plano and Collin County through a partnership with CCCCDC. This is an important resource to our business community has helped countless small businesses open their doors, increase their sales and revenue, continue growth, create jobs, and even helped them access capital.

As our local Senator, we wanted to make you aware of this new issue that we see as a priority to our local business community. We will continue to be involved throughout the process to advocate on behalf of these local higher education institutions and the impact they have on our business community.

Sincerely,  
  
Jamee Jolly  
President/CEO

“The Plano Chamber of Commerce is committed to maximizing business development and economic growth of the community through advocacy, education, innovation, and collaboration.”