

For Immediate Release

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## **Conference Committee Triples Funding for TEXAS Grant Program**

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*CSSB 1 increases funding by \$200 million to help 50,000 thousand Texas students go to college*

(AUSTIN)// --The Senate-House Conference Committee on the budget today approved a proposal by Senate Finance Chairman Rodney Ellis (D-Houston) to triple funding for the TEXAS Grant Program and open the doors to college to thousands of additional Texas students. The funding increase represents the largest amount of state funding ever appropriated to a financial aid program in Texas.

"This is a tremendous victory for Texas families," said Senator Ellis. "With this proposal, the State of Texas has sent the message to our children that, if you work hard and follow the rules, you will have the opportunity to go to college. I wish we could go even further, but in a tight budget year, this represents a major step forward that we can build on."

The Conference Committee approved Chairman Ellis' proposal to increase funding for the TEXAS (Toward EXcellence, Access, & Success) Grant Program by \$200 million over the biennium, which will provide TEXAS Grants to nearly 50,000 students every year.

Last session, Senator Ellis and Representative Henry Cuellar (D-Laredo) authored legislation creating the TEXAS Grant Program and provided \$100 million in funding. TEXAS Grants pay for tuition and fees to qualifying college students at the public or private college or university of their choice. In the program's initial two years of existence, it has provided nearly 20,000 new grants to Texas students seeking to continue their education.

Currently, students from households earning approximately \$25,000 or less qualify for the program. Senator Ellis' initiative raises the household earning level up to \$40,000, expanding access to thousands of Texas families. The program is modeled after Georgia's groundbreaking HOPE Scholarship program that provides scholarships to any student with a "B" average.

"In today's world, a college education is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity," said Ellis. "This investment will pave the way for an entire generation of Texans to get a college education and ensure that Texas has the highly skilled, highly educated workforce it needs to succeed in the digital age."

*For more information on the TEXAS Grant Program, call toll-free 1-877-782-7322.*