



**PA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**  
655 K Street NW, Ste. 700, Washington, DC 20001  
PAEAonline.org • 703-548-5538

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April 6, 2023

The Honorable Paul Bettencourt  
Majority Leader  
Texas Senate

The Honorable Dade Phelan  
Speaker  
Texas House of Representatives

The Honorable Carol Alvarado  
Minority Leader  
Texas Senate

The Honorable Trey Martinez Fischer  
Minority Leader  
Texas House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Phelan, Majority Leader Bettencourt, Minority Leader Martinez Fischer, and Minority Leader Alvarado:

On behalf of the PA Education Association (PAEA), the national organization representing all 300 accredited PA programs in the United States including 12 programs in Texas, we are writing to express the Association's strong opposition to SB 17 and House Budget Rider 62. These proposals, which purport to advance academic freedom and the transmission of knowledge, would instead pose a threat to the accreditation status of PA programs in the state at a time of growing health workforce shortages and persistent health disparities. As such, the Association urges the Texas legislature to oppose their enactment.

Among their most concerning implications, SB 17 and House Budget Rider 62 would, either directly or indirectly, prohibit resources to be used to support diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and activities at public institutions of higher education. Beyond PAEA's values-based

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opposition to such a policy, this proposal is particularly troubling given its implications for the accreditation status of public PA programs within the state. As of 2020, all PA programs are mandated by their accrediting body to have sponsoring institution-provided resources to promote diversity and inclusion. This accreditation standard appropriately reflects the value of a culturally competent health workforce in combatting health disparities and is in alignment with PAEA's core values. As underserved communities throughout Texas struggle with provider shortages, it is critical that the Texas legislature avoid taking any legislative action that could disrupt the pipeline of future providers such as SB 17 and House Budget Rider 62.

Beyond the proposed prohibition of funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, PAEA has similarly strong concerns with a provision in SB 17 restricting faculty trainings on DEI issues. Trainings that equip faculty to better understand the socioeconomic challenges that their students face and how they can be supported throughout their educational journey are critical to ensuring students successfully proceed to graduation. Any legislative proposal that inhibits this development poses unnecessary harm to students, faculty, and patients and should be vigorously opposed.

PAEA strongly urges the Texas legislature to reject these divisive proposals and instead support policies that promote better health outcomes for all. Should you have specific questions or if you would like additional information, please contact Senior Director of Government Relations Tyler Smith at 703-667-4356 or [tsmith@PAEAonline.org](mailto:tsmith@PAEAonline.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sekhon".

Linda Sekhon, DHSc, PA-C  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Fletcher".

Sara Fletcher, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer