

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Jalisa Broussard](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
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From: sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com <sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com>
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To: Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)

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Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about
[Texas Workforce Commission](#)

Public Comments

1

First Name

Chris

Last Name

Coxon

Title

President

Organization you are affiliated with

Collegiate Edu-Nation

Email

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City

Roscoe

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Collegiate Edu-Nation encourages the Sunset Advisory Commission to strengthen the Texas Workforce Commission's capacity to support rural workforce development through sustained regional coordination, practical technical assistance, meaningful employer engagement, and stronger alignment across education, workforce, and economic development partners.

Rural Texas has many strong programs and committed partners, but limited staff and institutional capacity can make it difficult to connect those efforts into durable regional workforce systems. We encourage the Commission to consider how TWC can better help rural communities build and sustain that coordinating capacity while maintaining flexibility for distinct regional needs.

Please see the attached written testimony for additional context, examples, and recommendations.

Your Proposed Solution

We encourage the Sunset Advisory Commission to recommend that TWC strengthen its support for rural workforce systems by prioritizing four connected areas: sustained regional coordination; practical technical assistance for rural education and workforce partners; meaningful employer engagement and stronger alignment across education, workforce, and economic development; and flexibility to address distinct regional needs.

TWC should build on existing state investments, including the Rural Workforce Development Grant Program established by Senate Bill 2448, to help rural communities develop the capacity to convene partners, identify shared workforce priorities, align education and training with employer demand, and sustain regional partnerships over time.

The goal should not be to create a new one-size-fits-all structure, but to ensure rural regions have the capacity and support needed to turn existing programs and investments into durable, employer-informed regional workforce systems.

Attachment

[Written Testimony_CEN_Chris Coxon.pdf](#) (146.89 KB)

**My Comments Will Be Made Public**

Yes

Chris Coxon

President – Collegiate Edu Nation

**Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
Texas Workforce Commission Sunset Review**

Good morning, Chair Kolkhorst, Vice Chair Hull, Senator Sparks, members of the Commission, and Sunset staff.

My name is Chris Coxon, and I serve as President of Collegiate Edu-Nation, a Texas nonprofit that works with rural school districts, colleges, employers, workforce boards, and community leaders to strengthen education and workforce pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Our message today is straightforward:

Rural Texas does not lack committed workforce partners. It often lacks the capacity to connect those partners around a shared regional strategy. And this is not a small population we are talking about. Texas has the largest rural population of any state in America—more than 4.7 million Texans live in rural communities. (*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census*) Across those communities, educators are preparing students for meaningful careers. Colleges are expanding workforce programs. Employers want to hire locally. Workforce boards and economic development leaders are investing in their regions. But geography still has a *profound* impact on *access to opportunity*.

Thirty-nine percent of rural Texas 11th- and 12th-graders attend districts that offer fewer than five advanced college readiness courses. (Source: Texas 2036, Advanced Coursetaking Analysis) And within that group, the disparity becomes even more striking: 20 percent of rural Texas 11th- and 12th-graders attend districts that offer no advanced college readiness courses at all, compared with just 2 percent of urban students and 4 percent of suburban students. (Source: Texas 2036, Advanced Coursetaking Dashboard; Texas Education Agency data) *In other words, a rural student is ten times more likely than an urban student to attend a district with no access to advanced coursework.*

That is a workforce issue as much as it is an education issue. The problem is not that nothing is happening. The problem is that too often, these efforts happen *separately*.

Many rural communities simply do not have the dedicated capacity to convene employers, schools, colleges, workforce boards, and economic development leaders;

identify workforce gaps; align education and training; and sustain a long-term regional strategy. As a result, a community can have several strong programs without having a coordinated workforce system.

The Legislature recognized this challenge through Senate Bill 2448. We appreciate Senator Sparks' leadership in advancing an approach that recognizes rural workforce development requires more than individual programs. It requires regional coordination, technical assistance, employer engagement, and sustained partnership. And we know these pathways can produce meaningful economic results.

Recent Texas analysis found that rural students who complete pathways combining college coursework with career preparation can see an estimated \$17,170 wage premium six years after graduation. (*Source: Texas 2036, The Next Generation of the Texas Miracle, 2026*) That is the opportunity in front of us.

Collegiate Edu-Nation is currently partnering with Texas Tech University as the Texas Workforce Commission begins implementing the vision of SB 2448. Although the work is still in its early stages, the lesson is clear: when rural communities have the capacity to coordinate intentionally, they can build stronger pathways, respond more effectively to employers, and connect more Texans to economic opportunity close to home.

As you consider recommendations for the Texas Workforce Commission, we respectfully ask that you support three priorities:

- First, strengthen regional coordination capacity in rural communities.
- Second, expand practical technical assistance that helps local partners turn workforce data and employer needs into action.
- Third, ensure education, workforce, and economic development partners are equipped to plan and act together.

Texas has already invested in strong programs and committed people.

The opportunity now is to connect them—to ensure that where a Texan lives does not determine the opportunities they can access or the workforce they can join.

Thank you for your time and your service to Texas.