



Testimony on House Bill 2457
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
March 16, 2017

Chair Reardon, Vice-Chairs Whisnant and Alonso León, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2457 and the authority for the HECC to receive and address student complaints.

Federal law requires that, for public and private institutions to receive student aid funding under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, states must have a process in place to independently review complaints concerning the institution.

The Commission has been working with Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities on language that meets the letter and spirit of the federal requirements and we believe that the language presented in the bill, as amended by the -1 amendment, fairly represents those discussions.

I would just like to highlight for the Committee a couple of ongoing questions we are working to clarify:

1. Whether or not the Commission is “resolving” student complaints by collecting and distributing them to other entities, or whether other language may be necessary to clarify the HECC role in this process.
2. Whether there should be a mechanism for entities to report to the HECC on the disposition of complaints referred to them for resolution.

Regardless of the resolution on these two points, the process of the HECC serving as the initial collection point for all student complaints, and then sending those complaints to the appropriate state, federal, or private entity for consideration, provides the HECC with a very narrow statutory authority meant only to meet the requirements of Federal law.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.