February 8, 2013

The Honorable Rick Perry
Office of the Governor
State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Perry,

On behalf of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC), the country’s largest Hispanic business organization, I am writing to urge your strong support of the proposed creation of a new university in south Texas, combining the existing University of Texas - Brownsville and the University of Texas-Pan American campuses, along with the medical school authorized by the legislature in 2009. The USHCC, which represents over 200 local chambers of commerce and the interests of over 3 million Hispanic owned businesses that contribute in excess of $465 billion to the American economy each year, enthusiastically supports this proposal.

As you know, the Rio Grande Valley population continues to grow, and the need for better access to educational resources has never been greater. Combining the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses into one new university would leverage the strengths of both, eliminate unnecessary duplications, and better meet the needs of the region. The new university has the potential to become a major research institution and a driver of economic development and innovation in south Texas.

Moreover, beginning operations of the south Texas medical school is imperative. The health care needs of this region are dramatically underserved, with only 124 doctors for every 100,000 residents, far behind the state average of 165 doctors and little more than half the national average of 240 doctors per 100,000 residents. The existing UTHSC-San Antonio’s Regional Academic Health Center already provides a solid foundation for the beginnings of the new medical school. The new school would have access to additional medical residency slots with partnering local hospitals throughout the region. This will help to ensure more doctors remain in the area after they’ve completed their medical education and help eliminate the shortage of doctors in South Texas.

Under the visionary leadership of Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa, a friend of the USHCC and strong ally of the Hispanic business community, the proposal offered by the University of Texas System to the legislature amply documents the educational and economic benefits the new institution would provide to the region and to the State – home to a large portion of Hispanic entrepreneurs, the fastest growing segment of American enterprise.

Additionally, the severe disparities facing the Hispanic populations in the Rio Grande Valley have been of national concern for many years. With the creation of this new university and medical school, you have the ability to address workforce readiness issues that have faced the region for generations. At the USHCC, we have seen what kind of success can be created when Hispanic entrepreneurs are given the ability to meet their potential through the benefits of education, and we are confident this new institution will substantially alter the trajectory of the region by harnessing the energies and talents of a population eager to contribute to the community in meaningful ways.
Your strong support for this proposal is critical to meeting the 21st century educational, medical and economic challenges of this region and of the State of Texas. As the demography of Texas becomes increasingly Hispanic, addressing the educational needs of Hispanic students and the educational and healthcare needs of the Rio Grande Valley is vital to assuring a prosperous Texas economy.

Finally, I want to thank you for your ongoing efforts to support the Hispanic business community throughout Texas. Both our current Chairman, Marc Rodriguez, and our Chairman Emeritus, Nina Vaca, often speak about your ongoing work to make Texas the country’s most business friendly state. The astonishing rate of business growth in the state proves the efficacy of your efforts. I also want to thank you again for joining the USHCC at some of our recent events, and I hope you know you are always welcome to join us for any of our engagements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Javier Palomarez
President & CEO
USHCC