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April 13, 2018

Commissioner of Education, Candice McQueen
Assistant Commissioner for Policy & Legislation, Elizabeth Fiveash
Title IV and Family Engagement Director, Brinn Obermiller

Dear Commissioner McQueen, Assistant Commissioner Fiveash, and Director Obermiller,

On behalf of Centro Hispano de East Tennessee, Conexión Americas, HOLA Lakeway, Latino Memphis, and the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, we urge you to take action against SB2333/HB2312, which seeks to end the use of consular ID cards, used by many immigrants, as a valid form of proving identity or establishing residency. We oppose SB2333/HB2312 in its entirety, both for its intent to marginalize immigrant communities and its impact on vulnerable TN citizens and residents. **However, we write to you today to express deep concern about the bill's consequences on parental engagement in their child's educational and learning experiences.**

While an amendment to this bill will continue allowing parents to use consular IDs for student enrollment, it does not extend to continued use of consular IDs for parents to be able to identify themselves in schools - such as to attend I.E.P. meetings, science fairs, sporting events, parent teacher conferences, or just to have lunch with their child. We have been working to introduce an amendment that would ensure parental engagement by allowing consular IDs for *“administering any activity or program for students or their family members”* not just student enrollment. However, the sponsor, Representative Lamberth rejected that amendment on the House floor session on Thursday April 12th.

During discussion of the bill, Representative Lamberth referred to the use of consular ID cards as a “problem” stating he did not think it was “safe” to allow parents with consular IDs on school campuses. All this despite the fact that consular IDs are regarded as one of the most secure documents issued by the Mexican government. To be clear, applicants for consular IDs who have a criminal record, are subject to prosecution, or face a judicial or administrative process in Mexico are not eligible for a consular ID. *See more in the enclosed document.*

We are deeply troubled by the direct attempt to use this bill to limit or thoroughly restrict immigrant parents' ability to fully engage in their child's education. We have had trouble in the past with some school districts who have attempted to deny parental access to school campuses without state issued ID. However, we have always been able to resolve this issue directly with the school while strengthening relationships with educators. This bill would prevent us from addressing this barrier when it arises.

Many families with children in Tennessee public schools live in mixed status families where a parent or guardian may be undocumented but the child is a U.S. citizen. Regardless, all children, no matter their immigration status, have a right to a K-12 education (Established in the Supreme Court Case Plyler v.

Doe). We believe that Tennessee should live out its guiding principle of “All Means All” in a way that includes immigrant children and their families as well.

We want all children to be able to succeed in school, and we know that parental engagement is a key component to that success. **Research over the past decade shows that students with parents involved in their schooling are more likely to earn higher grades and score higher on tests, enroll in higher-level programs, attend school regularly, and graduate and go on to postsecondary education. Schools with strong family engagement practices see students doing better academically and socially.**

The positive results of parent engagement are undeniable. **We therefore cannot and must not allow xenophobic policies to impact the educational progress we have made as a state over the past decade.** It is especially important as we enter a new era of school accountability with an increased focus on so many metrics that could be positively impacted by more - not less - parental engagement. Any measure that limits parental engagement has the power to impact entire families, and entire schools. On behalf of our organizations, and the families and students we serve, we ask you to join us in opposing SB 2333/HB 2312.

Sincerely,

Centro Hispano de East Tennessee

Conexion Americas

HOLA Lakeway

Latino Memphis

Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition