

# Longview News-Journal

## Tyler Morning Telegraph

### **YANCY: THE IMPACT OF HB 8 ON THE LOCAL WORKFORCE**

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By [Justin Yancy](#)

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In today's rapidly evolving job market, the importance of education and training cannot overstated.

As the president of the [Texas Business Leadership Council](#), I am proud that we advocated for passage of House Bill 8 in the 88th legislative session and we are now seeing its transformative impact for community colleges across Texas, including locally at Kilgore College and Tyler Junior College.

With nearly 800,000 open positions in Texas, employers are grappling with a significant skills gap. HB 8 addresses this by providing funding for community colleges tied to student outcomes, particularly focusing on credentials of value including short-term workforce credentials, with an emphasis on regional and statewide high-demand fields.

With these priorities, Texas is fostering a higher education system that is responsive to local workforce needs.

Community colleges play a pivotal role in supporting the workforce of the future. They are on the front lines of training the next generation of skilled workers, and HB 8 equips them with the resources to do so effectively.

To maximize this new support for workforce education, Texas is leveraging a national program called the Workforce Partnership Initiative that is led by the Business Roundtable and supported by the Business-Higher Education Forum in close partnership with the Texas Business Leadership Council, Texas Association of Community Colleges and Educate Texas.

This program is gaining momentum in the Lone Star State and is now expanding to East Texas with a college-employer convening hosted in collaboration with Longview Economic Development Corp., Kilgore College and Tyler Junior College on Oct. 22 at the Infinity Event Center in Longview. This convening is an important opportunity for employers in the region to share insights and communicate the labor challenges they face.

The Texas Workforce Partnership Initiative seeks to develop and scale industry-aligned credentials of value, increase work-based learning opportunities, and provide employers with accelerated access to competitive, diverse, ready-to-work learners with in-demand skills and credentials.

This initiative supports collaboration between colleges and local businesses, ensuring that our students are learning the skills that are truly needed in the job market.

However, while HB 8 lays a strong foundation, sustained investment by the Legislature is crucial. Our community colleges are already outperforming expectations, and continued funding is essential to build on this success.

As the demand for skilled labor grows — projected to reach 72% of jobs requiring postsecondary credentials by 2031 — community colleges are well-positioned to meet these workforce needs. Stable funding will allow them to expand successful programs and implement innovative student success initiatives, ensuring more students earn credentials and thrive in Texas' rapidly evolving economy.

Investing in education is investing in the future of Texas. By empowering our community colleges through House Bill 8, we can close the skills gap, strengthen local economies and help more Texans achieve career success.

I encourage employers to engage with their local community college directly or through programs like the Texas Workforce Partnership Initiative. Through these collaborations, we can ensure that East Texas remains a competitive force in the state economy.

Justin Yancy is president of Texas Business Leadership Council.