

To the Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature,

My name is Ben Kurian, and I am a high school student invested in fair and equitable access to medicine. I send this letter in staunch opposition to House Bill 5294, which would mandate A through F grading in medical school curriculum and prohibit the consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions.

I am writing because this bill has immediate and personal consequences. Just weeks ago, my cousin Ananya had been accepted to medical school, but now faces the possibility of giving up her spot at Baylor College of Medicine. Under H.B. 5294, that environment would be eliminated. For students from underrepresented backgrounds, this is the difference between a fair learning environment and one that perpetuates disparities.

The unfortunate reality is that medical education is not on an even playing field. Students from marginalized racial and socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to come from underfunded schools and lack access to costly research opportunities. Letter grades magnify these inequalities by rewarding that earlier advantage instead of future clinical competence. By contrast, pass/fail grading reduces stress and burnout *without compromising academic outcomes*¹, while improving skills like collaboration and professionalism, which are essential to patient care.

H.B. 5294 would also place Texas med students at a huge disadvantage. More than 80% of U.S. medical schools (including Harvard, Stanford, and Mayo Clinic) use pass/fail grading in their preclinical years².

Consider this likely hypothetical: imagine yourself as residency program director with two candidates from similarly ranked schools, one from UTSW and one from Vanderbilt; both received identical 75% scores, yet the Texan student receives the C and the one from Vanderbilt receives a P. Who appears stronger on paper? *The candidate with the pass will appear more competitive*. Research shows physicians are far more likely to practice in the state where they complete their training³, meaning this bill also threatens Texas's medical workforce.

The prohibition on considering race and ethnicity in admissions further compounds this harm. Race-conscious admissions are not about preference, but rather, about context. Holistic review allows medical schools to understand how applicants have navigated

unequal systems and to train physicians who can actually serve Texas's diverse population. Diverse physician workforces are proven to be associated with improved patient trust and health outcomes, especially for communities of color that have historically experienced discrimination in healthcare.

H.B. 5294 is being framed as a return to "merit," but merit cannot be measured without acknowledging unequal starting points. This bill risks narrowing who can succeed in medicine and, ultimately, who receives care.

I respectfully urge you to oppose H.B. 5294 and to allow Texas medical schools the autonomy to use evidence-based evaluation and admissions practices that promote patient-centered care.

Thank you for your time and service to Texas.

Sincerely,

Ben Kurian

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Sources

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19704204/>
2. <https://www.ama-assn.org/medical-students/medical-school-life/where-medical-students-can-stumble-pass-fail-preclerkship>
3. <https://www.ama-assn.org/medical-residents/transition-resident-attending/how-training-location-specialty-affect-where>