



The Honorable Senator Erin Grall
Chair, Committee on Education Postsecondary
Florida State Senate
306 Senate Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

The Honorable Senator Linda Stewart
Vice Chair, Committee on Education Postsecondary
Florida State Senate
205 Senate Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Chair Grall and Vice Chair Stewart,

On behalf of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), I am writing to express our organization's views on HB 999 and SB 266. Specifically, we have concerns as to how they would impact our campus student chapter members as they pursue careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

With over 62 million of its population being Hispanic in the state of Florida, we are particularly concerned with the proposed House bill language in Section 4. 10004.06 (1) ((2)(a)(b)). This language could be interpreted by some as prohibiting any expenditure made by colleges and universities to direct-support organizations like SHPE. It could potentially disenfranchise a vast majority of Hispanic constituency in Florida seeking to strengthen their STEM studies and workforce opportunities with SHPE's support and nationwide network.

SHPE is a non-profit organization that, since 1974, has dedicated its mission to increasing and promoting access to STEM education and advancing workforce development opportunities for the Hispanic community. We primarily accomplish this through more than 250 collegiate student chapters around the nation. SHPE's mission of bridging the gap between Hispanics and STEM is, continues to be, an essential component to strengthening the domestic STEM workforce, related National Security industries, and improving emerging technologies needs by bringing Hispanics into the workforce of critical industries by way of leadership and hands-on opportunities at on-campus student chapters.

In Florida, SHPE has a grand total of 1711 members all across the state. Our membership is comprised of students that are first-generation, military veterans, identify with special abilities, from a low socio-economic background, or transfer from community colleges in their undergraduate and graduate STEM degrees. Through our college and university chapters, members receive access to more than \$300,000 in scholarships, paid internships, fellowships, and co-op opportunities. They also get face time with Fortune 500 companies and government agencies seeking to grow local economies with domestic Hispanic talent. Furthermore, students obtain access to a nationwide network that not only brings them mentorship, career, and professional development benefits, but also relevant competitions and awards opportunities that strengthen their road map to successful and fulfilling jobs in the STEM industry.

To further our mission of growing the STEM education and workforce pipeline, our membership engages with local communities at high-schools, middle-schools, and elementary-schools to support, enhance, and complement current K-12 STEM learning. Through these community outreach programs, our

members connect with young students and increase STEM education access, awareness, while improving pathways to college-readiness. Additionally, our members connect with parents to broaden and expand their financial literacy understanding to prepare them for college, so they may better support their students throughout their STEM journey.

With the leadership of our on-campus chapters, SHPE continues to positively impact graduation rates while preparing our members to be highly skilled, problem-solving, solution finders in Florida's STEM workforce.

We strongly recommend that you ensure that the Florida Legislature does not intentionally or inadvertently risk cutting off funding for student organizations like SHPE chapters through SB 266. The critical role that our chapters play in growing Florida's short-term and long-term STEM education and workforce pipeline is well-evidenced and beneficial to the State's economy.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations in the above and thank you for your leadership and consideration of our priorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miguel Alemañy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Miguel Alemañy
Chief Executive Officer