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**Senator Lucio Statement on Senate Concurrence  
to Senate Bill 24, Creating New South Texas University**

**AUSTIN** - Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) delivered the following remarks on the Senate Floor regarding Senate concurrence to Senate Bill 24, the bill to create a new South Texas university.

"Mr. President and members, I am delighted to rise and join my colleagues today in concurring to House changes to Senate Bill 24.

"As you all know, the creation of a new first-class university in the Rio Grande Valley has been our biggest priority this Session. We started this Session with the goal of creating a new university that will span the entire Rio Grande Valley. Along the way, we had some contentious details to work out, but we resolved them. I need to commend our Rio Grande Valley Delegation for working so hard through the legislative process to resolve any differences. In particular, I want to thank my colleagues in the House for forging today's compromise language.

"The passage of Senate Bill 24 will mark a historic day for the Rio Grande Valley. The Rio Grande Valley will soon become a center for multinational education, medicine, and industry.

"This legislation is the first important step toward creating the Valley's only Tier One research university. The UT System and our delegation envision a university with state-of-the-art resources and the ability to attract top-notch faculty.

"The impact this legislation will have in creating educational opportunities in the Valley cannot be overstated. Currently, no UT System emerging research university has a medical school integrated into its campus. I expect this new school will quickly become eligible for national research grant dollars. This school will also be eligible for Permanent University Fund money, which can be applied to build new lecture space and cutting-edge research facilities. All of these factors will make this new campus highly sought-after by research faculty from all over the globe.

"This legislation may also mark the start of emerging industry related to the university. The Rio Grande Valley is already one of the largest and fastest-growing areas of the Texas. I fully expect the new university will attract students and professionals interested in international and bi-cultural programs. From this, for example, a vibrant healthcare industry or port industry may be strengthened.

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"The inclusion of the future South Texas school of medicine as part of this new university marks the culmination of decades of work expanding higher education and in particular medical education in the Valley. I take great pride in the fact that the bill to create the University of Texas at Brownsville was one of the first bills I passed when I took office in the Senate. To improve access to quality health care in the Valley, I also authored legislation to create the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen. Finally, during the 81st Session I authored legislation to transition the RAHC into a stand-alone medical school and health science center. Today, I'm proud to join Senator Hinojosa, and Senators Seliger and Zaffirini as a joint author on Senate Bill 24.

"Today also marks the culmination of an entire Session's worth of hard work from the UT system and members of the Valley Legislative Delegation. I would like to thank Chairman Gene Powell, Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa, and the UT System for setting for us a bold new vision of the Valley, and for pledging to support the new university with a \$100 million investment over the next 10 years to accelerate the pace of creating the future South Texas School of Medicine.

"I want to thank UT-Brownsville President Juliet Garcia and UT- Pan American President Robert Nelsen for their tireless advocacy on behalf of new University. I'd also like to thank our local government and business leaders for supporting this legislation.

"I'm grateful to our leadership, Governor Perry, Governor Dewhurst, Speaker Straus, and Chairmen Seliger and Branch for their assistance.

"I also need to thank my friend Sen. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, as well as Representatives Rene Oliveira, Ryan Guillen, Armando Martinez, Sergio Munoz, Jr., Terry Canales, Bobby Guerra, and Oscar Longoria for their hard work and leadership.

"Finally, I'm thankful to my son, Representative Eddie Lucio, III, who in the darkest and most challenging moments of this development demonstrated incredible leadership by bringing stakeholders together to achieve consensus. I'm humbled that the next generation of leaders have become the torchbearers for higher education.

"Building the medical school and expanding the RAHC was always intended to be a regional project. I'm so happy that we stand united as a Delegation today.

"Again members, passage of Senate Bill 24 will mark the beginning of a new day for the Rio Grande Valley. Today, people come to the valley because of our history. Tomorrow they will be coming to the Valley to watch us make history.

"Thank you Mr. President and members."

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