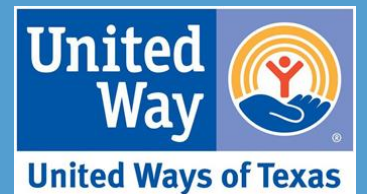




Texas Communities & the 87th Session

A recap by United Ways of Texas



The background of the image is a photograph of an ornate, classical ceiling, likely from a government building or a grand hall. The ceiling features intricate architectural details, including decorative moldings, recessed panels, and a central circular area with a grid pattern. The lighting is warm and highlights the textures of the ceiling.

EDUCATE

ADVOCATE

REFLECT

REPEAT

Today's Goals

- **Inform** –provide some key wins and missed opportunities/disappointments from the 87th legislative session
- **Inspire** –share how the network activated on key issues this session and ideas for future advocacy.
- **Influence**—empower our local United Ways to use this information and to start thinking how they can build your policy muscle during the interim.

The 87th Regular Session—140 (interesting) days

- Texas Capitol re-opened & Opening day protocols were released for both chambers
- Rep. Dade Phelan (R-Beaumont) elected Texas House Speaker
- The Senate changed rules—once again—for Republicans to maintain advantage in Senate
- Deadly winter storm swept Texas in February
- Texas lawmakers sent \$248 billion two-year budget to Gov. Greg Abbott
- Texas Democrats abandoned House floor, blocking passage of voting bill before final deadline
- Governor Abbott issued statement on last day of session stating a special session with include election integrity and bail reform “along with other priorities items”—July 8th special session called.

Status	86 TH Regular Session	87 th Regular Session
Introduced House Bills (HBs)	4765	4671
Passed HBs	969	581
Introduced Senate Bills (SBs)	2559	2256
Passed SBs	460	486
Total Passed HBs & SBs	1429	1073

Session Stats

Our Advocacy & Impact



1,600 +	bills tracked covering issues of importance for Texas communities
300 +	cards of support put in by United Ways of Texas staff for bills being heard in committees
90	attendees at Virtual Advocacy Days with representation from nearly 29 local United Ways
70 +	advocacy actions taken by United Ways including contacts made to legislative offices, oral and written testimony, local agendas, calls to action, sign on letters
11	statewide collaborative policy groups with representation from United Ways of Texas

EDUCATION

Early & out of school care and education

Parent & caregiver engagement

Student achievement gaps

Student health & wellbeing

Pathways to college and career

HEALTH

Prevention and early intervention

Physical, mental, & behavioral health services, including substance use treatment

Healthcare coverage

Social determinants of health in managed care

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Childcare support

Affordable housing & homelessness prevention

Safe, reliable, and affordable transportation

Workforce education and training

Fair lending, financial literacy, credit repair, asset building, & access to banking

NONPROFIT COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Nonprofit capacity and equitable support

Nonprofit contracting data transparency

Digital inclusion & equity

Volunteerism & Giving

211 Texas Information and Referral System



NONPROFIT & COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Key Wins

Digital inclusion priorities advanced

- **HB 5 (Ashby)** - state broadband office (based in the Comptroller's office), state broadband plan, and grant program to improve broadband infrastructure and address barriers to digital connectivity
- **Budget items** – 3 riders strengthening digital inclusion in TWC programs; \$3.75 million for library digital connectivity initiatives; \$398 million in federal relief dollars for student connectivity

Increased support for volunteerism

- **SB 44 (Zaffarini)** – paid leave for state employees volunteering with VOAD organizations during disaster recovery

Responses to COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri

- **SB 3 (Schwertner)** – power grid reforms, including changes to how power companies prepare for future storms and the creation of a statewide power outage alert system
- **SB 239 (Powell)** – requires DSHS to develop/implement disease prevention implementation system

NONPROFIT & COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Missed Opportunities

No additional investment/improvement in 211 Texas Information and Referral

- Budget rider to allow for efficiency, innovation in operations was not adopted in final budget

Still limited transparency in data contracting

- Budget rider to start tracking nonprofit status of state contracting entities was not adopted in final budget

Little movement on criminal justice reform

- **HB 686 (Moody)** – “Second Chance” legislation was vetoed by Governor Abbott



March 18, 2021

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Phelan, and legislators,

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the state's broadband and digital connectivity challenges. It forced millions of Texans to rely on their internet connection for pediatric visits, virtual school, workforce training, job interviews, court hearings, mental health services, and more. In some cases, supports for children, families, and individuals were strengthened by the expansion of online services. However, individuals who did not already have broadband access, digital skills, or access to digital devices were left behind.

As we know, Texas is one of only six states with no state broadband plan. We appreciate Governor Abbott and state leaders making the creation of a broadband office and plan a priority this legislative session. We also applaud current efforts by the Texas legislature to address the infrastructure gap that has prevented many communities from accessing broadband internet. These efforts are important as part of a comprehensive effort to close the digital divide. In addition, we encourage state leaders to consider addressing issues such as digital access and readiness, which disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, as efforts to close the digital divide are pursued.

This session, we call on state leaders to go beyond infrastructure and ensure legislation addresses digital access, adoption, and readiness.

Advocacy in Action

Q&A

EDUCATION

Key Wins

Full funding for 2019 school finance reform

- \$464 million increase to formula funding based on changes in student allotments
- \$664 million for targeted programs to address student learning impacts from COVID-19 (no direct funding for virtual learning)

Pre-k and early learning remain top priority

- **SB 2081 (Menéndez)** – pre-k class size limits
- Formation of bipartisan Texas House Early Childhood Caucus

Support for emergent bilingual students bolstered

- **SB 560 (Lucio)** – creates strategic plan for improvement/expansion of bilingual education
- **HB 2256 (Guerra)** – creates bilingual special education certification
- **SB 2066 (Menéndez)** – updates term “student of limited English proficiency” to “emergent bilingual student”

EDUCATION

Key Wins

Student mental health addressed

- **SB 179 (Lucio)** – ensures school counselors spend more time supporting students and addressing mental health needs
- **HB 2287 (S. Thompson)** – increases amount/access to data for the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health

Pathways to college and career strengthened

- **HB 1247 (Lozano)** – requires tri-agencies to develop strategic framework for work-based learning
- **HB 3767 (Murphy)** – Texas Education and Workforce Alignment Act – requires tri-agencies to collaborate on state workforce goals, designate pathways, and modernize data systems
- **SB 1615 (Bettencourt)** – expands the adult high school diploma charter school program
- **SB 1230 (Taylor)** – establishes the Texas Commission on Community College Finance
- **Budget items** - \$486 million to fund enrollment growth; \$110 million additional higher education financial aid



**PHILANTHROPY
ADVOCATES**
a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

 **Texas Early Childhood
English Learner Initiative**
A project of Texans Care for Children, Philanthropy Advocates, and IDRA

AIM

HIRE

TEXAS



EDUCATE TEXAS
a COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

TEXAS STUDENT SUCCESS COUNCIL
87TH REGULAR SESSION LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Advocacy in Action

Q&A

HEALTH

Key Wins

Medicaid eligibility improved for moms and kids

- **HB 133 (Rose)** – extends Medicaid for women from 2 months to 6 months postpartum
- **HB 290 (Cortez)** passed as a provision of HB 2658 – allows eligible children to remain enrolled in Medicaid insurance by reducing inaccurate mid-year eligibility reviews.
- **Budget rider** directing the Health and Human Services Commission to identify unexpended Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) funding to establish a Health Services Initiative that can support CHIP outreach and enrollment and prevention programs, including Family Connects.

Telehealth expanded

- **HB 4 (Price)** – expands and makes permanent some pandemic-related telehealth and telemedicine changes.

Increased investments in behavioral health and other supports

- \$8.4 billion in behavioral health across 25 state agencies; \$19 million increase for Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium; additional \$164.2 million for Child Protective Services.
- Additional \$2 million to CASA

HEALTH

Missed Opportunities

Health coverage expansion for low-wage workers

- **HB 3871(J. Johnson)/SB 117(N. Johnson)**—Live Well Texas bill—would have brought in billions of federal dollars to provide over one million low-income Texans with an affordable health insurance option.

Increased investments in prevention and early intervention programs

- Budget provides increases in Community Youth Development (CYD) and Nurse Family Partnerships (NFP); however, **no increases for other priority prevention programs**, including Family Connects.

Addressing health disparities & ensuring health equity

- **HB 4139 (Coleman)** - would have established the Office of Health Equity



CHILDREN'S HEALTH
COVERAGE COALITION
FORMERLY THE CHIP COALITION

KEEP TEXAS



MOMS & KIDS



HEALTHY

#txlege



#SICKOFITTX

TEXAS PRENATAL TO THREE
(PN-3)



Advocacy in Action

Q&A

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Key Wins

Big, bipartisan strides taken to support childcare

- **HB 619 (S. Thompson)** – requires the development of a strategic plan to support child-care workforce.
- **HB 1792 (Button)** – strengthens Texas Rising Star by consolidating the certification process, ensuring the monitoring of programs is fair, consistent, and reliable across the state.
- **HB 2607 (Talarico)** – ensures that childcare subsidy providers participate in Texas Rising Star through a phased approach. It ensures that public funds go to programs that commit to safe and quality care.

Access to the safety net (SNAP, TANF, etc.) recognized by many leaders

- **SB 224 (Perry)** – simplifies the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application and recertification process for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **Budget items:** Full restoration of state funding to Texas food banks and home-delivered meal programs;

Efforts to preempt payday and auto title lending ordinances & increase cost of loans defeated

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Missed Opportunities

Housing affordability & stability, tenant protections, and homelessness prevention

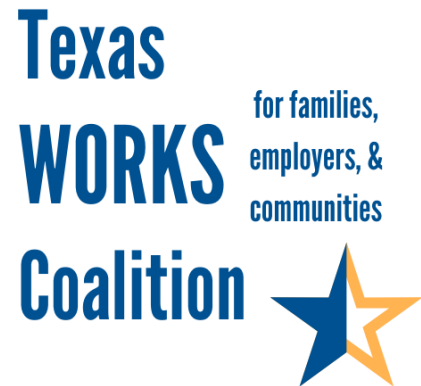
- **HB 2906 (Bernal)** ensures rental payments from a tenant are applied to rent before they are applied to other obligations.
- **HB 628 (Rosenthal)** prohibits a landlord or property manager who is receiving a LIHTC allocation from raising rent during the duration of a tenant's lease agreement.
- **HB 1260 (Bowers)** requiring the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless to conduct a study on the feasibility of establishing a centralized homelessness crisis response data system.

Increasing Access to Safety Net (SNAP, TANF, etc.)

- **HB 2641 (Rodriguez)** – would have modernized the “Vehicle Asset Test” used to determine eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- **HB 2126 (Walle)** – SNAP E&T/College Hunger Bill—would have drastically improved the SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program by leveraging third-party partnerships and federal matching funds to improve the quality and variety of training opportunities for participants. The bill would have also reduced hunger on college campuses by lifting SNAP restrictions for certain college students.

Ensuring an equitable, inclusive workforce recovery

- No meaningful investments in workforce education and training, adult literacy, skills development.



Advocacy in Action

Q&A



Reflecting–Discussion

What policy action did your UW take that was different than in the past or new for your UW?

What action steps or policy actions do you want to take differently in the future?

The Interim

Rulemaking

Utilization of Federal Funding

Redistricting

Special Session(s)

Sunset Process begins for 2022

Interim Charges



Thinking Ahead—Discussion

What are some key issue areas/bills that you will continue to engage on post-session?

Texas Communities & the 87th Legislative Session

A recap report by United Ways of Texas



**Read the full report or a single section
of the report:**

<https://bit.ly/3vXTcG1>



Texas
United
2021



Thank you

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