

2021 Policy Priorities for the 87th Legislative Session



Childcare and Dependent Care

- Stabilize and support the care economy—a critical sector that includes the care of children, people with disabilities, and older adults and is an essential workforce support.
- Ensure more families with children receive childcare financial assistance.
- Strengthen and scale quality, flexible childcare options, such as family childcare networks, relative care, workplace childcare, etc.
- Promote dual (two-generation) workforce education and training and childcare and early education programs.

Housing and Transportation:

- Ensure more Texans have access to quality, affordable housing across a continuum and can maintain housing stability.
- Expand innovative transportation solutions aimed at ensuring more Texans have access to opportunities, including employment.

Health and Behavioral Health

- Protect and improve access to health insurance and physical, mental, and behavioral health services, including substance use treatment.
- Strengthen integration of behavioral health services and supports in workforce development, including workforce education and training.
- Support strategies and initiatives aimed at improving emotional wellbeing, including increased access to support services to K-12 and other individuals engaged in post-secondary education.
- Ensure the health and safety of individuals engaged in workforce education and training and bolster employer confidence by developing state guidance by industry/area.

Adult Education and Literacy:

- Strengthen and invest in adult education and literacy, including services and supports for English Language Learners (ELL) and individuals taking high school equivalency exams.
- Strengthen oversight and accountability of high school equivalency assessment providers, including private testing centers and other basic adult education agencies.
- Scale the Ability to Benefit (ATB) program in Texas to support individuals without high school diplomas who do not have HSE or GED in career pathways.
- Better support and more quickly level up Internationally Trained Professionals (ITP).
- Ensure digital literacy is integrated into all workforce education and training program and services, including Adult Education, ELL, HSE, and integrated education and training.

Safety Net (SNAP E&T and Benefits)

- Address the benefits cliff in Texas to better support a family's path to self-sufficiency.
- Address barriers to expanding the SNAP E&T 50-50 option (Third-Party reimbursement)—which allows states to draw down more federal dollars for other supportive programs through SNAP E&T.
- Maximize TANF for safety net supports for families and workforce development.

- Address current income and asset limits for SNAP and TANF to help low-income families move out of poverty and build financial security.
- Ensure all Texans can quickly access and maintain eligibility for safety net programs (i.e. unemployment, SNAP, Medicaid, etc.) through increased efficiencies, innovations, and improvements.

Other Priorities:

- Bridge the digital divide and ensure digital inclusion—broadband, updated technology/hardware, and digital literacy skills.
- Support criminal justice reform and address barriers to successful reentry.
- Align state agencies and integrate transportation, housing, prevention and early intervention, and other systems into workforce and economic development strategies.
- Support policies, practices, and programs focused on ensuring debt and lending fairness and strengthening the financial health of Texans.
- Invest in Texas 211 and strengthen its ability to serve as a front door, connector, and data resource for critical community needs and services.
- Create more opportunities for Texans to develop critical employability skills necessary for success in the workplace.