85th LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP

MAKING TEXAS A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE AND DO BUSINESS
A General Overview

United Ways of Texas (UWT) presents a summary of policy work during the 85th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, which spanned 140 days from Tuesday, January 10 to Monday, May 29, 2017. Prior to the start of the Legislative Session, UWT sought input from its local United Way (UW) members and their leadership, volunteers, partner agencies, and other stakeholders to develop the Texas United Way 2017 Public Policy Agenda, which was ultimately approved by UWT’s Board of Directors. Throughout the session, Texas United Ways maintained a highly visible presence at the Capitol, collaboratively and actively working to bring together diverse stakeholders and to effectively find common ground on important issues surrounding education, financial stability, health, and the nonprofit sector in Texas communities. United Way representatives worked closely alongside legislative members and staff alike in support of a variety of policy proposals related to our established priority areas of:

- EDUCATION
- HEALTH
- FINANCIAL STABILITY
- NONPROFIT SUPPORT

When reviewing this document, please note that the information is presented in a brief format for reading ease. If you would like more detailed information on any of the items mentioned or have other questions regarding the 85th Legislative Session, please feel free to contact the UWT team. To review the whole text of specific bills, go to Texas Legislature Online, search, click the “text” tab, then be sure to select the enrolled, or final, version of the bill. Of course, you are welcome to contact the UWT office for assistance in looking up bills.

Leadership Highlights

A few highlights and statistics of the 85th Session include:

- Governor Greg Abbott • President of the Senate
- Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick
- Speaker of the House Joe Straus III
- State Comptroller Glenn Hegar • Presented the state revenue estimate projection of $104.87 billion available for general spending at session’s start
- 26 (twenty-six) new legislators • Majority conservative membership in the freshman class

Bill Numbers & Movement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INTRODUCED</th>
<th>PASSED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOUSE</td>
<td>4,333</td>
<td>700 (16%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENATE</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>511 (22%)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>6,631 bills filed</td>
<td>1,211 to Governor’s desk</td>
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This compares to 6,276 bills filed & 1,322 (21%) bills passed during the 84th Session. The Governor vetoed 44.
The Governor’s Response

Governor Greg Abbott had twenty days, or until Sunday, June 18, 2017 to act upon legislation passed during the 85th Regular Session. His actions on legislation included:

- Signing
- Vetoing
- Taking No Action

*If the governor does not sign the bill, it becomes a law without his signature.*

Vetoes

On June 15, Governor Abbott vetoed 50 bills that were passed during the 85th Legislative Session. 50 is the largest number of bills a governor has vetoed in a decade since the 80th Regular Session in 2007. Last session he vetoed 44 bills. Of the 50 vetoed, bills UWT were hoping to see passed included:

- **SB196:** Sylvia, Garcia(D) & Coleman, Garnet(D) Directed schools to notify parents if they did not have a nurse, counselor, or librarian assigned during all hours.
- **SB790:** Miles, Borris(D) & Howard, Donna(D) Extended the women’s health advisory committee to 2019.
- **SB1912:** Zaffirini, Judith(D) & Hinojosa, Gina(D) Improved procedures for mental health court cases & authorized mental health public defenders offices.
- **SB1743:** Zaffirini, Judith(D) & Hinojosa, Gina(D) Transferred the Office for Prevention of Development Disabilities to University of Texas-Austin.
- **SB1444:** West, Royce (D) & Davis, Sarah(R) Improved procedures related to de novo hearings & required precedence for suits affecting parent-child relationships.
- **HB1342:** Parker, Tan(R) & Hughes, Bryan(R) Required schools to provide sexual abuse prevention programs.
- **HB1500:** Giddings, Helen(D) & West, Royce(D) Required indicators of achievement to include the percent of students who earn an associate’s.

Special Session

Shorty after Sine Die on June 6, Governor Abbott ended speculation by calling the Texas Legislature back for a special session. The special session will begin on July 18th and is expected to last for 30 days.

Governor Abbott instructed the Legislature to first pass critical “sunset” legislation that will keep several state agencies running. This was a key piece of legislation that was not passed during the regular session and is a primary reason for the need for a special session. Governor Abbott also laid out an ambitious agenda of 19 items for the legislature to address once sunset legislation is passed.

Of the Governor’s priorities, Texas United Ways’ focus includes the prohibition of taxpayer dollars to collect union dues, school finance reform, extending a mortality task force, as well as a couple of local preemption issues, which could lead to attempts to broaden the scope of preemption.

Governor Abbott may expand his call to include additional topics to address at any time. Any other legislation that could be filed outside of the bounds of the Governor’s call are subject to both House and Senate rules, and of course, the Texas Constitution. Particularly, the Texas Constitution states, “When the Legislature shall be convened in special session, there shall be no legislation upon subjects other than those designated in the proclamation of the Governor calling such session, or presented to them by the Governor.” The rules note that traditionally only legislation put forth in the Governor’s call will be considered. These rules are not focused on limiting what legislation is filed, but are designed to restrict what legislation is able to move forward.

*Governor Abbott’s 20 specific agenda items:*

1. Sunset Legislation
2. Teacher pay increase of $1,000
3. Administrative flexibility in teacher hiring & retention practices
4. School finance reform commission
5. School choice for special needs students
6. Property tax reform
7. Caps on state & local spending
8. Preventing cities from regulating what private property owners do with trees
9. Preventing local govt’s from changing rules midway thru construction projects
10. Speeding up local government projects
11. Municipal annexation reform
12. Texting while driving preemption
13. Privacy
14. Prohibiting the use of taxpayer dollars to collect union dues
15. Prohibiting the use of taxpayer dollars for abortion providers
16. Pro-life insurance reform
17. Strengthening abortion reporting requirements when complications arise
18. Strengthening patient protections relating to do-not-resuscitate orders
19. Cracking down on mail-in ballot fraud
20. Extending maternal mortality task force
Texas United Ways’ Success

Texas United Ways worked diligently this session to advance legislative priorities for the entire system, following our public policy agenda which was collaboratively created based on common, critical community needs with suggestions by local UW staff, and was approved by the UWT Board of Directors. UWT signed-on in support of numerous proposed bills aligned with our policy priorities. In addition, we signed on to show our support of good bills that fit within our principles when requested by legislators, legislative staff, coalition members, or advocacy partners. Texas United Ways’ success in the 85th Legislative Session includes accomplishments in the areas of health and financial stability.

Collaborative/Collective Advocacy

United Way signed-on in support of 213 individual pieces of legislation, resulting in an approximate 37% success rate in getting those measures to the Governor’s desk.

Financial Stability

Stopped Payday Lending Preemption

Texas United Ways worked closely with other advocates through the Texas Fair Lending Alliance to oppose and stop several bills and amendments that would have preempted the unified payday lending ordinance that many United Ways across Texas have worked with their local partners to pass.

Health

Child Welfare/Foster Care Reform/SB11

United Ways worked with state partners through the Child Protection Roundtable to advocate for a significant funding boost and to pass important reforms related to Child Protective Services and child abuse prevention. Prior to session, the Legislature granted an emergency request from CPS to hire more than 800 new employees and provide raises case workers that will reduce turnover and ensure more children are checked on in a timely fashion. The state increased investments in foster care reimbursement rates that will increase the number of homes and services available to foster care children. SB 11 took helpful steps by expanding community-based foster care in a measured way and improving oversight over foster homes, among other productive measures. Other important bills strengthened prevention services and boosted support for kinship providers who take in young relatives.

Mental Health Reform

United Ways advocated for increased mental health resources and reforms this session. $160 million was added for various community-based mental health services and projects, $35 million more was approved for state hospital operations, and $300 million from the Rainy Day Fund will be used for state hospital repairs and construction. The Legislature also passed several measures that will improve mental health services for children. Examples include bills to strengthen Community Resource Coordination Group (CRCG) services for children with complex mental health challenges; improve adolescents’ access to mental health screenings; and encourage trauma-informed practices in schools.
The Budget and Key Fiscal Priorities

Following is a summary of the big-picture budget items considered during the 85th Regular Session, as well as key United Way priorities within the budget.

**Senate Bill 1**

The Senate and House agreed on a **$217 billion 2018-2019 budget**, officially known as SB1. The total amount of General Revenue spending is $107.8 billion, which is about the same as the current budget, $108 billion. This amount is $7.2 billion short of the $115 billion requested by state agency leaders. Because of Texas’ rapid population growth—which also means rapid growth of public school student enrollment—keeping overall spending flat actually translates into a significant cut in investments over the course of the biennium. While the dollar amount of key areas such as public and higher education, healthcare, and public safety is about level with funding in the 2016-17 budget, experts estimate that this biennial budget will, in real terms, be an **approximate 8% decrease** considering population growth and inflation over the next two years. While it was common to hear the tight budget this session was due to the drop in oil and gas prices, which certainly has contributed to some of the budget constraints, it is worth noting that decisions made during the past two legislative sessions have reduced the General Revenue available this session by $10.5 billion through tax cuts and diversions.

SB1 proposes using just under $1 billion of that state’s $1 billion Rainy Day Fund. As a result, the balance of the Fund is expected to grow to $11 billion by the end of the 2018-19 budget cycle. The amount budget writers decided to use is almost exclusively designated for state facility repair (particularly the state’s aging mental health hospitals), construction, and equipment purchases (notably for bulletproof vests for police office). The final budget agreement also relies on part of the original Senate proposal to defer $1.8 billion of a constitutional highway fund transfer until 2020, which means that $1.8 billion can technically be counted as General Revenue available in 2018-19.

**Medicaid**

The 2018-2019 state budget for **total Medicaid funding is lower** than the previous amounts allocated and spent for the current 2016-17 budget, including for the 2015 appropriations for 2016-17 and the supplemental appropriation to finish out 2017. Total funding for Medicaid in 2018-19 is $62.4 billion, in which $26.3 billion are non-federal funds from the Legislature. The Legislature included a significant cost-containment budget rider which directs the Health and Human Services Commission to reduce Medicaid spending by $830 million in all funds and $350 million in state General Revenue. The budget covers the Legislative Budget Board estimate for caseload growth for Medicaid in 2018 but does not account for caseload growth in 2019. Because neither the House nor the Senate was willing to include the General Revenue needed for cost growth, Medicaid will certainly need supplemental appropriations before the next budget cycle ends in August 2019.

The 2018-19 budget restores only 25% of the Medicaid pediatric therapy rate cuts that were mandated in the 2016-17 budget. The original House budget proposal included a 75% restoration of therapy reimbursement rates. Additionally, the House supplemental budget included funds for restoration and a repeal of the directive for HHSC to continue additional funding cuts. However, none of these provisions were included in the final version of the budget. The final state budget reduced the proposed therapy reimbursement rates from the House-proposed 75% to a 25% restoration.

When factoring in cost growth for 2018-19, it can be estimated that the state Medicaid program has been underfunded this session from anywhere between $1 billion and $1.5 billion in state General Revenue. Additionally, program reductions and efficiencies mandated through various budget riders assume an additional Medicaid program reduction of $426
million in the state General Revenue. Consequently, coming into the 86th Legislative Session in 2019, legislators should expect a Medicaid shortfall of at least $1 billion in General Revenue, but that number could reach as high as $2 billion if costs run higher than anticipated, or if cost-containment measures are not able to return expected savings.

Public Education

The final version of SB1 essentially includes no additional funding for public education from the state budget. The House passed HB21 by Dan Huberty (R-Houston) which had broad bipartisan support and would have taken a first step in reforming the state’s school financing system by infusing an additional $1.9 billion in funding and modernizing the school financing formulas. However, in their version of the bill the Senate included what’s been called a “poison pill” when Sen. Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood) attached a voucher-like program for disabled students, as well as a significant funding cut. The House refused to accept the Senate’s proposed changes, and the session’s school finance reform effort died. Budget experts estimate that Texas public schools will need $2.7 billion over the next two years in order to keep up with inflation. Because of the impasse between the House and the Senate, the legislature will not fund any of the needed $2.7 billion and will keep the basic per-pupil funding-level at $5,140.

Early Childhood Education

The Legislature cut appropriations for the high-quality pre-k grant program which was established during the 84th Legislative Session. Legislators included a budget rider which directs all school districts to comply with the grant program’s quality standards, using $236 million of existing school funding that districts receive for pre-k based on enrollment numbers. Outside of the high-quality pre-k grant program, districts are already projected to receive $1.58 billion to run half-day pre-k programs for high-need 3 and 4 year olds who struggle with English or come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This budget rider now directs them to use 15% of that funding, $236 million, to implement pre-k programs that are “consistent with the high-quality grant program as laid out by the Governor last session.” High-quality program standards include setting low student-teacher ratios, avoiding Common Core curricula, hiring qualified teachers, and reporting student progress and other data to TEA. It remains unclear as to how these requirements will be enforced. The Legislative Budget Board has stated that no school district will be required to make such improvements and that all districts will receive their full funding for pre-k based on enrollment numbers. However, the Governor’s office has indicated that TEA will be responsible for “vigorously enforcing high-quality standards on all schools that receive this funding.”

While certain enforcement details remain somewhat cloudy, one thing is clear: the Legislature is asking public schools to make specific quality improvements to their pre-k programs, while cutting the grant program that was designed to fund such improvements. Undoubtedly, there is still more work to do during the interim to expand support for high-quality early childhood and pre-k programs.
Priority Bills Passed

Some key priority bills within United Ways’ scope of interest that passed through both chambers include the following items. These bills made up the UWT Legislative Dashboard.

Special Education

Prohibiting caps on special education enrollment through SB 160—Prohibits the use of performance indicators on any agency monitoring system that evaluate the total number or percentage of enrolled students who receive special education services.

Workforce Development

Improved workforce linkages in education through SB 22—Creates the Pathways in Technology Early College High School Program (P-TECH) which will enable high school students levels 9-12 to participate in a work-based education program that will enable them to earn a 2-year degree/certificate in addition to their HS diploma by completing work-based training through an internship, apprenticeship, or other job training program. The bill requires the program to be open enrollment and offer academic mentoring, include articulation agreements with higher education institutions and agreements with regional industry & business partners addressing workforce needs, including agreements to offer first-priority interviews for qualified students who complete the program and a preference for first-generation college students.

Mental Health

Increased support for mental health services—$160 million added over the biennium for various community-based mental health services and projects, $35 million added for state hospital operations, and $300 million from the Rainy Day Fund will be used for state hospital repairs and construction.

Increased support for community collaborations to reduce recidivism through SB 292—Creates a matching-grant program for county-based community collaboratives to reduce recidivism of persons with mental illness, based on frequency of arrests, incarceration, & the total waiting time for forensic commitment to a state hospital.

Greater mental health parity thorough HB 10—Improves mental health parity in Texas by expanding state regulatory authority to include parity protections for all fully insured plans. The bill also designates a person within the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to be an ombudsman for behavioral health access to care to address complaints regarding mental health parity; creates a mental health and substance use disorder stakeholder work group to develop a framework to implement and enforce mental health parity in Texas; and requires the state to gather data regarding the denial rate of mental health and substance use disorder services.

More funding for community-based approaches to mental health through HB 13—Encourages local stakeholders to create locally driven solutions to mental health challenges within their respective communities by providing for a matching grant program to support community mental health programs providing services and treatment to individuals experiencing mental illness.

Child Welfare & Foster Care

Increased support for child protection workforce—$160 million added over the biennium for various community-based mental health services and projects, $35 million added for state hospital operations, and $300 million from the Rainy Day Fund will be used for state hospital repairs and construction.

Increased support for prevention and early intervention programs—Modest increases in funding for key prevention and early intervention programs. Including, $1.32 million increase per biennium for Services to At-Risk Youth (STAR), $1.6 million increase per biennium for Helping through Intervention and Prevention (HIP), $800,000 increase per biennium for the Texas Home Visiting Program, and a $5 million increase per biennium for the Nurse Family Partnership.

Community-based foster care through SB 11—Passed comprehensive reform bill that restructures the state foster care system to a community based model of care in which the Department will contract with local non-profit organizations to handle casework, establish a pilot-program for non-profit organizations to handle behavioral health care for children, and require children to have medical exams within three days of entering into the system, among other measures.

Increased support for kinship care through HB 4—Reform measure that increases monetary assistance brackets for kinship parent caregivers based on family income, including an offense for fraudulent activity, as well as a directive for DFPS to publish a report on relative placements and permanency outcomes.

Administrative reforms to state agency structure for greater responsiveness through HB 5—Removes the Department of Family and Protective Services from being under the direction of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and makes it a standalone agency reporting directly to the Governor’s office with the intent of streamlining and decision-making in abuse and neglect investigations and improving the organizational flexibility for DFPS to manage its service delivery and workforce more effectively.

Focus on prevention and early intervention services through HB 1549—Reform measure focused on prevention and early intervention services that combines strategic planning to increase the reach of services, improves usage of data to geographically target those services, and improves management of caseloads and trauma supports for CPS staff. Also establishes a two-year task force to make recommendations to the department regarding bill implementation & PEI’s five-year strategic plan released last fall.
UWT Sign-On List: Working Hard on Many Different Fronts

Throughout the 85th Session, UWT staff embraced a collaborative advocacy approach, continually engaging in ongoing dialogue with our coalition partners and our local UW members in order to enhance our impact. UWT monitored and tracked a total of exactly 1,100 bills and signed on in support of 213 pieces of legislation that aligned with common community needs in order to create a lasting, systemic change. In the end, our policy advocacy efforts were successful.

When the final gavel sounded on May 29th, the last day of session, UWT had signed-on in support of 213 different proposed House and Senate bills and resolutions. Of that amount, 80 bills, or 37%, passed both chambers and were sent to the Governor’s desk. The following provides highlights of those successful bills, categorized by tracking categories. (If you would like to view the full UWT bill tracking report or if you have any questions or seek additional information, feel free to contact the UWT team.)

**EDUCATION**

**HB 357: Huberty, Dan(R) Huffman, Joan(R)** Relating to the eligibility of the children of certain first responders for free prekindergarten programs in schools.
- Expands pre-k eligibility to include children of seriously injured or fallen first responders.

**HB 674: Johnson, Eric(D) Garcia, Sylvia(D)** Relating to the suspension of a student enrolled in a grade level below grade three from public school and to a positive behavior program for public schools.
- Limits out-of-school suspensions for students in pre-k—Grade 2

**HB 1593: Bohac, Dwayne(R) Hughes, Bryan (F)(R)** Relating to the engagement strategies included in a school district’s family engagement plan.
- Includes evidence-based programs & interventions that engage families in supporting a student’s learning at home in schools’ family engagement plans

**HB 2039: Huberty, Dan(R) Zaffirini, Judith(D)** Relating to creating an early childhood certification to teach students in prekindergarten through grade three.
- Creates an early childhood certification to prepare educators for unique challenges of Pre-K—Grade 3

**SB 490: Lucio, Eddie(D) Huberty, Dan(R)** Relating to information regarding the number of school counselors in public schools.
- Directs more detailed PEIMS data input on school counselors

**HB 1569: Ashby, Trenton(R) Nichols, Robert(R)** Relating to the disclosure to public schools of certain records of students placed in residential facilities
- Requires residential facilities providing care to students to provide districts/charters with any information retained by the facility related to the student’s school records, behavioral history, and record of arrests/indictments.

**HB 2729: Lucio III, Eddie(D) Miles, Boris (F)(D)** Relating to an inventory of credentials and certificates that may be earned by a public high school student through a career and technology education program.
- Creates an annually updated website inventory of industry-recognized credentials & certificates that may be earned through career & technology education programs and align with workforce needs.

**SB 1318: Taylor, Van(R) Parker, Tan(R)** Relating to designation of mathematics innovation zones by the commissioner of education and to the establishment of pay for success programs to provide necessary funding.
- Awards grants to schools designated as a mathematics innovation zone to support the implementation of an innovative math instruction program that address essential knowledge & skills and complies with objectives, metrics, & data requirements; authorizes districts/charters to use a pay-for-success program involving private financing under which payments are dependent on achievement of measurable outcomes.
SB 1839: Hughes, Bryan (F)(R) Koop, Linda(R) Relating to the preparation, certification, and classification of public school educators.

- Streamlines the certification process for teachers from out of state, requires TEA to provide PEIMS data to educator preparation programs to assist in assessing their impact, and creates an early childhood certification

SB 160: Rodriguez, Jose(D) Wu, Gene(D) Relating to a prohibition of a monitoring system performance indicator based on the number or percentage of students receiving special education services.

- SB160 Prohibits the use of performance indicators on any agency monitoring system that evaluate the total number or percentage of enrolled students who receive special education services. Effective immediately

SB 1404: Hughes, Bryan (F)(R) Ashby, Trenton(R) Relating to requiring school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to report certain information regarding voluntary after-school programs and voluntary summer programs.

- Requires districts/charters to report through PEIMS information about the number of students participating in and the availability of expanded learning opportunities

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**HIGHER EDUCATION**

HB 655: Claridy, Travis(R) Zaffirini, Judith (D) Relating to the filing of a degree plan by students at public junior colleges.

- Requires public junior college students to file a degree plan by no later than the end of the second semester immediately following the semester in which the student earned 30+ credit hours or transferred to the school with 30+ hours.

HB 1638: Guillen, Ryan(D) West, Royce(D) Relating to statewide goals for dual credit programs provided by school districts.

- Directs THECB & TEA to develop standards & goals for dual credit programs, and requires program info, including agreements & MOUs between districts & institutions, to be posted on websites.

HB 2431: Deshotel, Joe(D) Creighton, Brandon Relating to the participation of public state colleges in the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant Program.

- Authorizes public state colleges to participate in JET Grant Program.

HB 2537: Guerra, Bobby(D) West, Royce(D) Relating to requiring public schools to provide information to certain students on the availability of financial assistance for postsecondary education.

- Increases awareness on the availability of DFPS education/training vouchers & tuition/fee waivers by requiring school counselors to provide the information during their 1st-year meeting with students who are or previously were in DFPS conservatorship

SB 887: Seliger, Kel(R) Claridy, Travis(R) Relating to a requirement that certain participating institutions under the student loan program administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provide loan debt information to students.

- Requires higher educational institutions to disclose to students receiving state financial aid administered by the THECB the following loan debt information—an estimate of: the total amount of education loans incurred by the student; the total payoff or a range, including principal & interest; and the monthly repayment amount, including principal & interest.
**FINANCIAL STABILITY & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**HB 108: Alvarado, Carol (D) Taylor, Larry (R)** Relating to the use of the skills development fund to facilitate the relocation to or expansion in this state of employers offering complex or high-skilled employment opportunities.
- The “Recruit Texas Program” bill allows TWC to use the skills development fund to provide a rapid response to & support services for employers expanding in or relocating to Texas, especially those who will provide complex or high-skilled employment opportunities, by providing leadership, direction, & linkage and awarding grants to colleges/institutes providing workforce training & support services to these employers.

**HB 136: Bell, Cecil (R) Uresti, Carlos (D)** Relating to inclusion of career and technology education and workforce training in the mission of public education.
- Amends the objectives of public education to include curriculum that prepares students to succeed in postsecondary activities, including employment and higher education, and directs the state to assist schools in providing career & technology education to students.

**SB 276: Watson, Kirk (D) Parker, Tan (R)** Relating to adult high school diploma and industry certification charter school pilot program requirements.
- Removes the limit of 150 individuals in enrollment and establishes standards for & standards to measure the performance of adult high school diploma programs operated under a granted pilot program charter.

**HB 471: Johnson, Eric (D) Hancock, Kelly (R)** Relating to authorizing a credit union or other financial institution to conduct savings promotion raffles.
- Incentivizes savings by authorizing financial institutions & credit unions to offer prize-linked savings programs

**SB 2105: Miles, Borris (F) Johnson, Jarvis (D)** Relating to the requirement that the Texas Workforce Commission provide certain employment information for secondary school students.
- Requires TWC to provide quarterly to TEA information regarding available professional development, business, & industry opportunities for students, disaggregated by county/region.

**HB 3921: Parker, Tan (R) Hancock, Kelly (R)** Relating to the financial exploitation of certain vulnerable adults.
- Requires financial institutions, dealer & investment advisors, and securities professionals who suspect the financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult (elderly, with disability, or a recipient of home or community-based services) to investigate & submit a report to the Adult Protective Services Division, and directs investigations and protective services.

**HB 3706: Lucio III, Eddie (D) Lucio, Eddie (D)** Relating to certain alternative education programs designed to address workforce development needs for at risk students.
- Creates an online dropout recovery education program that offers flexibility & support and prepares at-risk students to enter the workforce and receive their diploma

**SB 2027: Rodriguez, Jose (D) Moody, Joe (D)** Relating to a study to evaluate by region training and employment opportunities in this state for individuals with an intellectual disability.
- Orders a region-oriented study regarding occupational training programs available for individuals with an intellectual disability to determine effective strategies for the sufficient development of transferrable employment skills.
MENTAL HEALTH

SB 1533: Rodriguez, Jose (D) Moody, Joe(D) Relating to mental health first aid training for university employees.
- Allows grants for Mental Health First Aid training for university employees who regularly interact with students. MHFA is a program that trains people on how to identify and help a person experiencing a mental health problem.

HB 2895: Price, Four(R) Seliger, Kel(R) Relating to the requirement that certain public institutions of higher education post mental health resources on the institution’s Internet website.
- Requires each public higher education institution to include a conspicuous mental health resource link on their website homepage that provides students information on the mental health resources available, regardless of whether the resources are provided by the institution.

HB 1486: Price, Four(R) Schwertner, Charles(R) Relating to peer specialists, peer services, and the provision of those services under the medical assistance program.
- Addresses the mental health workforce shortage by including peer support in the Medical Assistance Program (MAP) and developing workforce requirements to distinguish peer support from other mental health service providers.

HB 2466: Davis, Sarah(R) Huffman, Joan(R) Relating to coverage for certain services related to maternal depression under the Medicaid and child health plan programs.
- Provides mothers in Medicaid the option to be screened for postpartum depression during their child’s wellness visit, and supports healthy pregnancies & births by asking on the Medicaid for Pregnant Women application about a woman’s preferred method of contact so health plans may send updates & information about health risks, wellness visits, and prenatal care.

HB 3292: Klick, Stephanie(R) Hinojosa, Chuy(D) Relating to the temporary continuation of medical assistance for certain individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Requires HHSC to continue to provide to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities additional medical assistance coverage for 90 days when a lapse is due to a renewal error or delay.

HB 1600: Thompson, Senfronia(D) Watson, Kirk(D) Relating to certain mental health screenings under the Texas Health Steps program.
- Requires a mental health screening be provided during the annual medical exam of children ages 12-18 enrolled in Medicaid.

HB 3083: Price, Four(R) Hinojosa, Chuy(D) Relating to eligibility requirements for the repayment of certain mental health professional education loans.
- Addresses the mental health workforce shortage by directing the board to annually seek the maximum amount of funds available through the state loan repayment program and includes chemical dependency counselors in the definition of “mental health professional” for repayment assistance.

HB 3808: Clardy, Travis(R) Menendez, Jose(D) Relating to student loan repayment assistance for certain mental health professionals and to the conduct that constitutes the practice of psychology.
- Creates a definition for “practice of psychology” and includes licensed marriage & family therapists in definition of “mental health professional” for loan repayment assistance program.

SB 1849: Whitmire, John(D) Coleman, Garnet(D) Relating to interactions between law enforcement and individuals detained or arrested on suspicion of the commission of criminal offenses and the confinement or release of those individuals prior to prosecution.
- The Sandra Bland Act requires additional de-escalation training for DPS & other law enforcement, provides punitive measures for those who repeatedly engage in racial profiling, and includes other aspects such as helping to divert the mentally ill from jails to more appropriate facilities & the outside investigation of jail deaths.

SB 1912: Zaffirini, Judith(D) Hinojosa, Gina (F)(D) Relating to certain notice requirements and filing requirements in court proceedings involving persons with mental illness and representation of proposed patients in proceedings for court-ordered mental health services.
- Authorizes only a county constable or sheriff to deliver a copy of mental health notices & establishes a procedure for maintaining the documentation and authorizes courts, with permission, to create a mental health public defender’s office.
MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

HB 1697: Price, Four(R) Nelson, Jane(R) Relating to the establishment of a pediatric health electronic access in rural Texas grant program.
- Establishes a tele-connectivity resource program to award grants to allow rural healthcare facilities to connect & consult with advanced pediatric specialists.

HB 1629: Coleman, Garnet(D) Zaffirini, Judith(D) Relating to the development of a quality-based outcome measure for the child health plan program and Medicaid regarding certain persons with HIV.
- Helps to reduce transmission of and improve the health of persons affected by HIV by directing HHSC to develop & implement a quality-based outcome measure that measures HIV viral loads.

SB 74: Nelson, Jane(R) Price, Four(R) Relating to the provision of certain behavioral health services to children, adolescents, and their families under a contract with a managed care organization.
- Provides children with greater access to certain behavioral & psychiatric rehabilitative services by requiring MCOs that contract with HHSC to provide targeted case-management & psych rehab services for specific children/adolescents/families

SB 1599: Miles, Borris (F)(D) Wall, Amando(D) Relating to maternal mortality reporting and investigation information.
- Promotes best practices for reporting and investigating pregnancy related deaths.

SB 74: Nelson, Jane(R) Price, Four(R) Relating to the provision of certain behavioral health services to children, adolescents, and their families under a contract with a managed care organization.
- Provides children with greater access to certain behavioral & psychiatric rehabilitative services by requiring MCOs that contract with HHSC to provide targeted case-management & psych rehab services for specific children/adolescents/families

HB 2466: Davis, Sarah (R) Huffman, Joan (R) Relating to coverage for certain services related to maternal depression under the Medicaid and child health plan programs.
- Provides more mothers with the option to be screened for maternal depression during their baby’s well-check visit with a pediatrician or other health provider by covering the screening through the baby’s CHIP or Medicaid insurance

HB 2159: Giddings, Helen (D) Relating to school district grace period policies and the provision of meals to public school students with insufficient balances on prepaid meal cards or meal accounts.
- Provisions amended to SB 1566 help prevent “school lunch shaming” – singling out or denying food to a student who does not have enough money for lunch – by requiring a school district’s board of trustees to adopt a grace period policy that allows a student whose meal card has depleted funds to receive lunch for a period of time.

SB 1743: Zaffirini, Judith (D) Hinojosa, Gina (F)(D) Relating to transferring the Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities to The University of Texas at Austin.
- Transfers the Texas Office of Prevention of Developmental Disabilities to the University of Texas at Austin, allowing the Office to continue its work to reduce the incidence and impact of disabilities

CHILD PROTECTION

HB 2124: Minjarez, Ina(D) Kolhkorst, Luis (R) Relating to the procedures for identifying and notifying relevant federal agencies about certain child abuse and neglect investigations.
- Directs DFPS to collect & share child welfare case files with military authorities and to provide support & resources to active service-members during an open investigation.

SB 1220: Miles, Borris (F)(D) Vo, Hubert (D) Relating to ensuring continuity of education and access to higher education, career information, and skills certification for foster care youth and former foster care youth.
- Requires continuity of educational programs for homeless students or students in substitute care who transfer schools, proposes a program to help foster youth obtain diplomas, industry & trade certifications, career counseling, and information regarding tuition/fee waivers available.
HB 7: Wu, Gene(D) Uresti, Carlos (D) Relating to child protective services suits, motions, and services by the Department of Family and Protective Services and to the licensing of certain facilities, homes, and agencies that provide child-care services.

- Makes procedural changes related to intervention in child abuse/neglect cases, including for protective order applications, suits affecting the parent-child relationship, placement of child, & court-ordered medical care, and improves support services for children in DFPS. Specific aspects include: creation of a statewide uniform DFPS basic family service plan, to be filed at each adversary hearing; directing courts to review placements not with relative/designated caregivers; prohibits courts from terminating parental rights in certain situations (such as being economically disadvantaged, having homeschooled the child, not vaccinating, administering appropriate THC for care; etc); prevents allegations or service plan restatements from being used as evidence; prevents constituting a parent’s voluntary agreement to place a child in temporary care as an admission to endangering conduct; authorizes a petition for temporary authority; allows dismissal of suits in which court has rendered a temporary order; allows protective orders for children who have been victims of/are still threatened by abuse/neglect; requires attorney ad litem for DFPS children; requires appropriate consultation w/ medical professionals for court-ordered care, incl. mental health; requires MCOs to ensure timely continuing care; allows DFPS to request admission of child to an inpatient mental health facility w/ physician consultation & continued monitoring; provision of birth certificates & other important ID/documentation; inquiry about Native American heritage in hearings; an annual independent living skills assessment for youth 14yrs+; coordination btwn DFPS & TJJD to collect data on multi-system youth; establishes family drug courts in counties; court-ordered child support payments while suit is pending; supreme court rules for court hearings; DFPS-lege report on use of broad-form & specific jury questions in suits affecting the parent-child relationship; automatic dismissal of certain cases; etc.

HB 1342: Parker, Tan(R) Hughes, Bryan (F)(R) Relating to child sexual abuse prevention training for public school students.

- Requires elementary & secondary schools to provide annual, age-appropriate, evidence-based child sexual abuse prevention training & anti-victimization programs to promote self-protection, prevent abuse & trafficking, and reduce child pregnancy.

HB 871: Roberts, Kevin (F)(R) Perry, Charles(R) Relating to child and family support services for families in crisis, including authorization agreements.

- Amends areas of the family code related to authorization agreements for nonparent adult caregivers; requires DFPS to cooperate with nonprofit & faith-based organizations in providing child & family support services to families in crisis, including respite care & voluntary guardianship, and prohibits DFPS from investigating a parent for abuse/neglect solely because they request information about services available.

HB 928: White, James(R) Uresti, Carlos (D) Relating to assisting certain children who are in foster care in the process of applying to institutions of higher education.

- Requires DFPS employees who are also members of a community resource coordination group (CRCG) to inform the group about tuition & fee waivers for higher education available to eligible children in foster care and requires school districts to facilitate the transition of eligible children by assisting the foster child with financial aid applications, scholarships, campus visits, military academy eligibility, entrance exams including payment for exam fees by DFPS subject to fund-availability, and coordinating contact between the child & a liaison officer designated for students formerly in DFPS conservatorship.

HB 834: Parker, Tan(R) Birdwell, Brian(R) Relating to regulating the custody transfer of an adopted child; creating a criminal offense.

- Creates a criminal offense for unregulated custody transfer

HB 1549: Burkett, Cindy(R) Kolkhorst, Lois(R) Relating to the provision of services by the Department of Family and Protective Services, including child protective services and prevention and early intervention services.

- Takes steps towards the prevention of child abuse & fatality and the preservation of families and makes improvements to the CPS workforce

HB 1556: Gonzalez, Mary(D) Menendez, Jose(D) Relating to the appointment of foster parents and other qualified persons to serve as educational decision-makers for certain children in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

- Allows foster parents to be involved in special education decisions earlier in the process
HB 3338: White, James(R) Miles, Borris (F)(D) Relating to the issuance of identification documentation for foster care youth.
- Requires DFPS & certain charitable volunteer advocates to develop procedures to ensure that a foster child obtains a driver's license/personal ID card before leaving the conservatorship of DFPS

HB 1521: White, James(R)Whitmire, John(D) Relating to the exchange of certain information between the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.
- Requires improved information sharing between DFPS & TJJD to better serve multisystem youth and improve coordination & efficiency in both systems.

HB 4094: Klick, Stephanie(R)Uresti, Carlos(D) Relating to the access of criminal history record information by the Department of Family and Protective Services.
- Requires DFPS to obtain criminal history records of all individuals involved with children in conservatorship, including fingerprints

SB 1806: Huffman, Joan(R) Miller, Rick(R) Relating to requiring the use of multidisciplinary teams appointed by children's advocacy centers in certain child abuse investigations.
- Proposes the use of multidisciplinary teams in all investigations of alleged child sexual abuse or other cases in the jurisdiction of children’s advocacy centers

SB 190: Uresti, Carlos(D) Wu, Gene(D) Relating to the effective management of caseloads in the investigation of child abuse or neglect reports by the Department of Family and Protective Services.
- SB190 Allows administrative closure of backlogged, low-risk child abuse cases, which would free time and resources, allowing caseworkers to focus on serious cases, would let families move out of limbo and get on with their life.

SB 999: West, Royce(D) Giddings, Helen(D) Relating to procedures for taking possession of a child and for certain hearings in a suit affecting the parent-child relationship involving the Department of Family and Protective Services.
- Simplifies the law to allow DFPS to better resolve cases in a timely fashion by placing emergency and non-emergency cases in the same statute so they will have the same kinds of safeguards in hearings.

SB 1758: Zaffirini, Judith(D) Turner, Chris(D) Relating to requirements for the court in permanency hearings for children in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services who are receiving transitional living services.
- Ensures DFPS fulfills their obligations to youth leaving conservatorship by requiring an annual independent living skills assessment for use by the Preparation for Adult Living Program, ensuring children obtain ID & critical documents, and inquiring about Native American heritage in permanency hearings.

SB 2039: Zaffirini, Judith(D) Thompson, Senfronia(D) Relating to the development of a program and training for public schools on the prevention of sexual abuse and sex trafficking and participation by the human trafficking prevention task force in that development.
- Develops models for curriculum on the prevention of sexual abuse & trafficking for use by schools

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY

HB 1407: Sheffield, J.D.(R) Seliger, Kel(R) Relating to the establishment of the emergency medical services assistance program.
- Establishes the EMS Assistance program to provide financial & educational assistance to eligible EMS providers, in which 60% of grants must be used to serve rural areas.

HB 281: Howard, Donna(D) Huffman, Joan(R) Relating to establishing a statewide electronic tracking system for evidence of a sex offense.
- Establishes a mandatory statewide tracking system for tracking evidence in sexual assault cases, allowing for the outside use of funding/grants.

HB 62: Craddick, Tom(R) Zaffirini, Judith (D) Relating to the use of a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle.
- Creates an offense for using wireless comm. devices to read, write, or send electronic messages while operating a motor vehicle, punishable by $25-99, or $100-200 if person's second offense; excludes if device was permanently or temporarily affixed to the vehicle, use for push-to-talk/voice-operated technology, use by FCC-licensed individuals, use in the course of occupational duties, use to summon emergency help or read emergency message. Prevents officers from taking possession of or inspecting a device; prevents points being assigned to a person’s license for the offense; includes the requirement of the knowledge of the effects of driving while texting/distracted on driver’s examinations; and requires DOT to post signs at state highway entry points informing of the law.
SB 128: Garcia, Sylvia(D) Thompson, Senfronia(D) Relating to a required training course on human trafficking for commercial driver’s license applicants.
- Requires commercial driver’s license training programs to include training & education on the recognition & prevention of human trafficking and directs DPS to provide informational materials on human trafficking to commercial DL applicants.

SB 1314: Rodriguez, Jose(D) Moody, Joe(D) Relating to the standards for substance abuse facilities and programs operated by juvenile probation departments.
- Requires the board to adopt reasonable standards for the operation of substance abuse facilities or programs by the juvenile probation departments and does not require facilities or programs operating under these standards to be licensed or otherwise approved by any other state or local agency.

VETERANS

HB 257: Hernandez, Ana(D) Buckingham, Dawn (F)(R) Relating to a report by the Texas Workforce Commission regarding the transition from military service to employment.
- Requires TWC to submit a military to employment transition report identifying the 5 most common military occupational specialties of service-members transitioning to employment, the 5 occupations that best-match transferable skills, the industry-based certifications that align, and other useful data for transitioning from service-member to employment, to the lege by 9/1 each year.

HB 846: Raney, John(R) Menendez, Jose(D) Relating to the implementation of student financial assistance programs for veterans and their families.
- Would allow support for veterans to use their benefits to their fullest potential and allow them to continue their education without worry of having to drop due to non-payment because of delayed benefits.

HB 865: Blanco, Cesar(D) Rodriguez, Jose(D) Relating to establishing a veterans services coordinator for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and a veterans rehabilitation dorm program for certain state jail defendants confined by the department.
- Establishes a veterans service coordinator & veterans reentry dorm program for certain defendants and a voluntary rehabilitation & transition program.

HB 3069: White, James(R) Campbell, Donna(R) Relating to the administration of and eligibility for participation in a veterans treatment court program and the issuance of orders of nondisclosure for certain participants who successfully complete that program.
- Revises the administration of and eligibility for participation in a veteran’s treatment court program to make them more similar to the structure of drug courts.

SB 27: Campbell, Donna(R) Blanco, Cesar(D) Relating to the mental health program for veterans.
- Requires the mental health program for veterans to include training and assistance for peer service coordinators

SB 578: Lucio, Eddie(D) Gutierrez, Roland(D) Relating to the creation by the Texas Veterans Commission of a veteran suicide prevention action plan.
- Establishes a comprehensive veteran suicide prevention action plan to increase access & availability to professional veteran health services and raising awareness & providing resources for veteran suicide prevention

SB 591: Lucio, Eddie(D) Blanco, Cesar(D) Relating to a community outreach campaign to increase awareness of veterans benefits and services.
- Establishes a community outreach campaign to provide information & increase awareness relating to benefits and services available to veterans

SB 588: Lucio, Eddie(D) Blanco, Cesar (D) Relating to information regarding private employers who have veteran’s employment preference policies.
- Directs Texas Workforce Commission & Veterans Commission to make available on their websites a list of each employer who has provided notice of a veteran employment preference policy.
NONPROFIT SECTOR VIABILITY

SB 1345: Watson, Kirk(D) Darby, Drew(R) Relating to the exemption from ad valorem taxation of property owned by a charitable organization and used to provide tax return preparation and other financial services without regard to the beneficiaries’ ability to pay.
- Allows community tax centers and charity organizations who provide tax-return preparation and other financial services the same tax exemption that is offered to nonprofits that offer those types of services regardless of the filer’s ability to pay.

SB 78: Nelson, Jane(R) Price, Four (R) Relating to the disposition of certain state surplus or salvage data processing equipment.
- Names Texas CASA as recipient for surplus/salvage computers from the state for use in foster/group homes.

SB 725: Miles, Borris (F)(D) Bernal, Diego(D) Relating to the authority of a school district to donate food to a nonprofit organization to be served to students of the district.
- The Student Fairness in Feeding act allows schools to donate excess food to a representative or campus employee working as a volunteer for a nonprofit to store, prepare, & distribute the food for hungry students and revises grace period policies for students with insufficient balances on prepaid meal cards.

HB 2933: Bonnen, Dennis(R) Taylor, Larry (R) Relating to the licensing and regulation of military optometrists and therapeutic optometrists who provide voluntary charity care.
- Authorizes military care licenses to provide free optometrist services in underserved areas.

ADVOCATE
85th Regular Session Low Points

As with any Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, there are low points and needed bills that do not pass in final form. For Texas United Ways, the most significant low point was the lack of new funding for high-quality pre-k and the failure to pass payday lending reform, despite the strong work put in during the interim and the several reform measures filed throughout the session.

Pre-K Funding Cuts

During the previous 84th Texas Legislative Session, lawmakers made available $118 million for the high-quality grant program established by HB 4. TEA distributed the $118 million in funding to 573 districts during the 2016-17 school year after one year of planning. In order to maintain level funding for pre-k, this session Governor Abbott called for $118 million per-year, or $236 million for the biennium. The original House budget proposal included $117 million for the high-quality pre-k funding, but only for one year of the biennium. The original Senate budget proposal included $75 million per-year, or $150 million for the biennium. During his State of the State Address on January 31st, Governor Abbott had sharp words for members of the legislature regarding their proposals for the pre-k program. Abbott said he was “absolutely perplexed” by the insufficient attention given to high-quality pre-k in the competing budget proposals released by both the House and Senate. Abbott concluded his remarks on pre-k by saying, “if you’re going to do this, do it right, or don’t do it at all.”

Shortly after Governor Abbott’s State of the State address, the House made a surprise move by shifting the proposed $117 million for the program into the supplemental budget. That funding, however, would be distributed to districts based on the number of students enrolled and would not require the same quality-standards or parental engagement components as the high-quality pre-k program. The Senate then followed suit by cutting a total of $180 million for public education budget items from their original proposal, including eliminating the original amount set aside for high-quality pre-k funding. However the Senate did move $65 million into a fund for a new public-private partnership program aimed at providing competitive grants to districts offering pre-k and enhancing the quality of those programs. Observers believe that the cause for these House and Senate budget maneuvers was largely a means of political retribution from legislative members directed at the Governor.

After the revised budget proposals were offered, UWT and other state advocacy partners organized a press-conference calling on lawmakers to fully fund high-quality pre-k. House and Senate leaders later appointed budget conferees to work out their budget differences in conference committee. After a series of private meetings behind closed doors, the conferees announced that, while the compromised budget did include a rider of $236 million for high-quality pre-k, which Governor Abbott required in order to not veto the budget, the funding for the program is not new money. Under the compromised budget, the state would allow districts to dedicate 15%, or $236 million, of the allotted $1.58 billion that districts already receive to administer basic half-day pre-k programs in order to implement pre-k programs that are “consistent with the requirements of a high-quality pre-kindergarten program,” as laid out by the Governor last session.

Under the compromised budget, the state would allow districts to dedicate 15% of the allotment they already receive in order to implement high-quality pre-k programs.

While the budget was the primary vehicle for funding the high-quality pre-k program, there were also a series of promising bills filed related to expanding access to pre-k and improving quality. Six bills were filed that would have expanded eligibility for free half-day pre-k: HB710 by Gene Wu, HB1858 by Ron Reynolds, HB196 by Mary Gonzalez, SB35 by Judith Zaffirini, HB1845 by Garnet Coleman, and SB484 by Miles Borris. Three bills aimed to place caps on pre-k class enrollment size: HB1839 by Helen Giddings, SB724 by Miles Borris, and SB73 by Rodney Ellis. Four bills were filed to limit student-to-teacher ratios in pre-k classrooms: HB188 by Diego Bernal, HB 2518 by Ina Minjarez. In addition, attempts were made to implement parent engagement, ratio, and quality standards and to expand half-day to full-day for pre-k programs through HB2255 by Ken King and HB2282 by Eric Johnson. Unfortunately, none of these bills received favorable consideration during their committee hearings and all were left pending in committee, unable to make it to the floor for a vote.

There were also a few attempts to expand access or implement quality measures for pre-k during the floor debate on the House’s school finance reform bill, HB21. First, Rep. Helen Giddings (D-DeSoto) filed an amendment that attempted to include pre-k program students in average daily attendance, which is a key component of the public school finance funding formula. Second, Rep. Lance Gooden (R-TerreI) filed an amendment to the education code which would have added an additional pre-k
allotment. Under his amendment, pre-k would receive permanent formula funding, beginning in 2019. Finally, Rep. Eric Johnson (D-Dallas) proposed his “gold-standard” pre-k program, which would have provided funds to districts to implement a full-day pre-k program. Each of the amendments were eventually killed.

As we move into the interim, UWT will continue our hard work with local United Ways, state advocacy partners, school districts, and other stakeholders to ensure more and more policymakers understand the significant impact of high-quality pre-k on improving educational outcomes and closing the achievement gap in Texas. This certainly will be a key issue that carries into the 86th Legislative Session in 2019. We expect to continue to build a strong foundation that will position United Ways, along with other education partners and advocates, to bring a strong voice to the issue.

Lack of Payday Lending Reform

While United Ways and partner advocacy organizations were successful during the 85th Legislative Session in stopping preemption of the local unified payday lending ordinance by halting bills and amendments, proactive efforts to bring state-level reforms to the payday and auto-title market were ultimately unsuccessful.

Tom Craddick (R-Midland) was the champion this session for comprehensive payday lending reform, just as he has been for the past three legislative sessions. He filed HB1134, which would have enacted the local unified ordinance at the state level. In addition, there were a handful of other key reform bills filed this session, such as HB741 by Diego Bernal (D-San Antonio) which would have ensured that payday and auto-title lenders will consider and document a borrower’s ability to repay prior to extending a loan, and HB975 by Helen Giddings which would have prohibited payday and auto-title lenders from pursuing criminal charges against a borrower. However, none of these bills received favorable consideration during their committee hearings and were left pending in committee, unable to make it to the floor for a vote.

While most of the payday lending reform activity took place during the committee process (and, in the case of stopping preemption bills, through behind the scenes work with Calendars Committee members), there was one day late in session where a surprise move set off a fierce House floor debate on payday lending reform and preemption. Early morning on May 22nd, rumors were swirling that Rep. Ryan Guillen (D-Rio Grande City) had plans to offer an amendment which would preempt the unified payday lending ordinance onto SB2065, a semi-related bill focused on broad-based licensing regulation. United Way leaders in McAllen and Brownsville sprang into action and worked quickly that morning to mobilize community leaders in the district to contact Rep. Guillen. These efforts were successful and helped convince Guillen to not propose the amendment on the floor. However, the threat of preemption sparked Rep. Craddick to step forward and offer his comprehensive payday lending reform bill as an amendment to SB2065.

The session’s debate on the issue of payday lending reform ended with a stalemate between consumer advocates and the powerful payday lending industry.

After Craddick proposed his amendment, which would have enacted the unified payday lending ordinance at that state level (while not preempting more stringent local regulations), an unplanned debate quickly commenced. This debate prompted Rep. Giovanni Capriglione (R-Southlake), who was the key proponent of payday lending preemption efforts in the House this session, to offer his preemption bill as an amendment to Craddick’s amendment. Sharp debate continued until Rep. Capriglione’s measure was taken for a full vote, which ended up being in his favor. The preemption amendment was passed by a margin of 74-64, therefore Rep. Craddick was forced to withdraw his amendment in order to kill Rep. Capriglione’s amendment-to-the-amendment to preempt the local ordinance. With that move, the session’s debate on the issue of payday lending reform ended with a stalemate between consumer advocates and the powerful payday lending industry.

Many United Ways across Texas are doing tremendous work at the local level to reform payday lending markets and offer innovative alternatives to borrowers. Between the 84th and 85th Legislative Session, at least twenty new cities adopted the unified ordinance, with many United Ways playing significant roles in their passage. Members of the legislature who represent districts where local ordinances have been passed are more likely to be supportive of statewide reform efforts and are much more likely to be reluctant to pass preemption legislation. In order to leverage our efforts for payday lending reform next session, UWT will continue to support local United Ways interested in passing the local ordinance in more communities, as well as those working to develop innovative alternatives to payday lending. This work during the interim is critically important in anticipation of possible future action by the Texas Legislature in the 2019 Regular Session, whether it be statewide reform efforts or attempts to preempt the local ordinances. In addition, we will continue to work with payday lending reform champions, such as Rep. Tom Craddick and Rep. Diego Bernal, and will seek new ways to develop more champions for reform on both sides of the aisle.
Looking Ahead

UWT intends to continue to push hard on many fronts in order to support the tremendous work done by local UWs across the state. We will continue to press forward in articulating the need for legislative measures which did not pass this session, including:

- Permanent funding for high-quality pre-k
- Reform of the payday lending industry
- School finance equity across the state
- Increased funding for 2-1-1 and much needed technology improvements
- Expanded opportunities to connect families & individuals with affordable care
- Recognition of the value of payroll deductions for charitable giving

Now that the 85th Regular Session is in the rearview mirror, and legislators are home in their districts before returning back to Austin for the Special Session in July, the time is perfect to engage in locally-drive legislative outreach. Take some time to begin thinking about how you and your local United Way can strengthen your relationship with your state representatives in order to maximize impact. Following are a few suggestions on how to engage with your leadership now that session has ended:

- **Send thank-you notes** to your local legislators to express support for their hard work during the session and their willingness to represent your area in the Texas Legislature
- **Call your elected officials** at their Capitol offices in Austin to express thanks
- **Thank Texas’ statewide leaders** for their service
  - The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor, 512.463.1830, greg.abbott@governor.state.tx.us
  - The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lt. Governor, 512.463.0001, dan.patrick@senate.state.tx.us
  - The Honorable Joe Straus III, Speaker of the House, 512.463.1000, joe.straus@house.state.tx.us
- **Invite your elected officials to upcoming board/staff/partner meetings** for legislative session briefings
- **Invite your elected officials & their staff to local UW events** or site visits
- **Hold town hall briefings** on the 85th Regular Session and invite legislators to speak
- **Honor** your elected officials for their hard work and dedication
- **Work with UWT staff to schedule an advocacy training** for local UW leadership, staff, & partner agencies, to determine local & state advocacy priorities, goals, and strategies.

*Remember, as always, your UWT team is here to help if you need additional assistance or have any questions.*

*Begin thinking about priority issues for the 86th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, which begins on January 8, 2019.*
Assistance and Support

As always, please let UWT know how we can further support you and/or your local priorities through public policy.

For more information about this document or our work this legislative session, please contact:

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Important Note: Information contained in this document is subject to change. For additional updates, contact Adrianna Cuellar Rojas (see above).