

TEXAS COMMUNITIES & THE 89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

A recap report by United Ways of Texas



UNITED WAY
United Ways
of Texas

INTRODUCTION

Texas United Ways believe effective state policy is essential to supporting the work of United Ways across local communities. That's why advocacy remains a critical tool for creating lasting, systemic change across Texas. Together, our statewide network of United Ways continues to strive for a future where all Texans thrive.

The Regular Session of the 89th Texas Legislature was challenging and required our network to play defense more than ever before. Despite a wave of policy proposals that impacted many communities, Texas United Ways significantly increased their engagement and presence this session. We hosted our first-ever official 211 Policy Briefing for legislative staffers, and our biennial Day at the Capitol saw record turnout from United Ways across the state.

The 2025 public policy agenda guided our advocacy efforts, reflecting the collective priorities of our diverse network of Texas United Ways in the critical areas of educational opportunity, healthy community, financial security, and community resiliency. This report highlights the legislative session's outcomes related to those priorities, the active participation of local United Ways, and key legislation tracked by United Ways of Texas (UWT).

While the session brought both wins and disappointments, the experience strengthened our network as well as our commitment and strategy for future advocacy in partnership with Texas United Ways to better serve all Texas communities.



**UNITED for a
future where all
Texans thrive.**

OVERVIEW OF THE 89TH REGULAR SESSION

The 2025 Texas legislative session began in January with many new House members and progress was initially slow as the House elected a new Speaker, Dustin Burrows. Over the 140-day regular session that ended on June 2, 2025, lawmakers filed nearly 8,900 bills and joint resolutions and passed around 1,300 bills.

Unlike the previous regular sessions—which ended in walkouts, impeachment proceedings, and other unfinished business—the 89th Regular Session wrapped up without major issues unfolding.

Public education, school finance, teacher compensation, property tax relief, and bail reform were major areas of focus. The Texas Legislature approved a roughly \$338 billion budget for the 2026–2027 biennium, representing a nearly 5% increase in all funds and an 8% increase in state funds compared to the previous biennium. Top Republican leaders in the House, Senate, and Governor’s Office were largely aligned on many priorities, resulting in a productive session for the GOP. At the same time, Democrats spent much of the legislative session playing defense and working to block or narrow several proposals.

While the regular session ended without the drama of previous years, Governor Abbott vetoed a bill banning hemp-derived THC products (SB 3)—a top priority for Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Soon after the veto deadline, Governor Greg Abbott called a 30-day special session beginning July 21, directing lawmakers to return to the Capitol to reconsider six bills he vetoed, including SB 3.



ADVOCACY & IMPACT

United Ways of Texas serves as a resource, voice, and partner for our Texas United Way members. During this legislative session, we actively worked to advance critical legislation and secure funding priorities on behalf of our network. At the same time, local United Ways collaborated to advocate for policies that positively impact the communities they serve.

2,300+

bills tracked

covering issues of importance for communities across Texas

140+

cards of support

put in by United Ways of Texas staff for bills being heard in committees

150

attendees at UW Capitol Day

with representation from over 14 local United Ways

100+

legislative actions by United Ways

including contacts made to legislative offices, oral and written testimony, local agendas, calls to action, and sign-on letters

11

statewide collaborative policy groups

with representation from United Ways of Texas

United Ways of Texas thanks our generous sponsors for UW Day at the Capitol — United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County, Arcosa, and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas — for helping make this day of advocacy and connection possible.

OUR PRIORITIES

As a network, we raised our collective voices during the 89th Legislative Session to advocate for the education, financial security, health, and nonprofit sector needs of our communities. While we faced more defensive challenges than in years past, Texas United Ways still made meaningful progress on several 2025 priority issue areas, including:



COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Our network successfully defended the nonprofit sector against several bills that would have affected community-based organizations. United Ways of Texas also led efforts to strengthen information and referral networks, including 211, with our priority bill HB 38 gaining strong support as a key legislative priority for Speaker Burrows.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Our advocacy focused on strengthening pathways to college and career readiness, working to ensure all Texas students have access to postsecondary opportunities that prepare them for success in the workforce and beyond.



HEALTHY COMMUNITY

In partnership with anti-hunger advocates, United Ways of Texas helped secure improvements to SB 379, which now only restricts the use of SNAP benefits for sweetened beverages and candy—significantly less restrictive than earlier versions of the bill.



FINANCIAL SECURITY

Our network played a key role in securing \$100 million in new funding for child care scholarships for working families, while also advocating for expanded access and improved quality of child care across Texas.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

The 89th Regular Session posed new threats to Texas' nonprofit sector, with several bills proposing increased scrutiny and restrictions. Lawmakers introduced several bills that would have placed new restrictions or oversight on nonprofits, including limits on how close "navigation service providers" could operate near schools and parks and new licensing requirements (SB 2623), financial disclosure mandates for nonprofits entering into sizable contracts with political subdivisions (SB 504/HB 4188), and expanded investigatory powers for the attorney general, including the creation of a new criminal offense (HB 4852/SB 2340).

The state budget passed this session prioritized major infrastructure investments, including substantial funding for water supply and system improvements through the Texas Water Fund, as well as increased allocations to strengthen IT systems and cybersecurity across state agencies. However, these investments were not matched in other important areas that support strong, thriving communities—such as digital connectivity, public health, early childhood education, and community-based mental health services.

Legislation to modernize 2-1-1, Texas' statewide information and referral network that connects Texans to local services and nonprofits (HB 38), was a priority bill for the Speaker. United Ways of Texas led advocacy efforts, in partnership with our network and other stakeholders, to move this bill and elevate the critical role 2-1-1 plays in community resiliency. While the bill did not pass, our collective efforts helped build strong legislative support and set the stage for progress next session.

Additionally, the Legislature advanced efforts to limit diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, most notably through SB 12, which was signed into law and restricts DEI-related roles, policies, and trainings in public K-12 schools while imposing new requirements for parental consent and employee conduct. Other DEI-related bills, such as SB 689 (which sought to prohibit state entities from promoting certain ideological concepts) and HB 5294 (which aimed to ban race considerations in medical school admissions), did not pass. While these efforts reflect ongoing debates at the state level, many nonprofit organizations—including Texas United Ways—remain committed to serving all communities and ensuring that programs are responsive to the diverse needs of the people they support.

Passed

Nonprofit Capacity, Volunteerism, & Charitable Giving

SB 2018 by Sen. Paxton establishes a Strong Families Tax Credit to incentivize business contributions to approved nonprofits that provide family strengthening services

SB 2411 by Sen. Schwertner updates the Texas Business Organizations Code, including changes to how corporations and nonprofits operate. It clarifies governance procedures, expands the use of electronic communication, and aligns legal processes with the newly established Texas Business Court.

HB 4226 by Rep. Morales Shaw exempts nonprofit food banks and housing and related service providers from paying motor vehicle sales, use, or rental taxes when acquiring vehicles for their operations.

Digital Connectivity & Cyber Security

SB 1405 by Sen. Nichols streamlines our state's broadband policy by raising the official definition of broadband to 100/20 Mbps, simplifying grant and loan processes at the Texas Broadband Development Office, improving mapping and transparency, and ensuring internet access remains tax-exempt.

HB 150 by Rep. Capriglione establishes the Texas Cyber Command to strengthen the state's cybersecurity operations.

Disaster Response, Recovery, & Resiliency

HB 1584 by Rep. Hull requires electric utilities to maintain a list of priority facilities—such as hospitals, police and fire stations, critical water systems, and certain state-run confinement facilities—and to allow eligible facilities to request inclusion via the utility's website. Utilities must confirm priority status upon request and share the list with the Texas Division of Emergency Management during declared disasters.

HB 3010 by Rep. Ashby creates the Rural Infrastructure Disaster Recovery Program, administered by the Texas Division of Emergency Management, to help rural communities recover from disasters. The program provides funding to eligible local governments to repair and rebuild critical infrastructure damaged by disasters.

Passed

Other Community Resiliency & Nonprofit Sector Bills:

SB 7 by Sen. Perry and HJR 7 by Rep. Harris dedicates \$1 billion in annual sales tax revenue to the Texas Water Fund for 20 years, beginning in 2027. The funding will support water supply projects and the repair of failing water systems across the state.

SB 2753 by Sen. Hall revises the early voting schedule by adding a second weekend of access, requiring longer Sunday hours, and mandating voting on holidays, while maintaining the 12-day period and eliminating the gap before Election Day.

HB 12 by Rep. Bell mandates regular efficiency audits and thorough performance evaluations for state agencies subject to the Sunset review process.

HB 1522 by Rep. Gerdes requires government bodies to post meeting notices at least three full business days in advance (instead of 72 hours). If a meeting involves discussion or adoption of a budget, the notice must include a physical copy of the budget unless it is clearly accessible on the entity's website homepage.

HB 5195 by Rep. Capriglione requires state agencies to modernize their websites using user-centered design to improve accessibility and reduce reliance on paper forms. It directs the Department of Information Resources to support agencies with templates, best practices, and technical assistance.

Key Budget Items:

\$723.9 million (all funds) across multiple state agencies for major digital infrastructure upgrades to improve cybersecurity, modernizing systems, and enhancing cross-agency data sharing; \$2.5 billion investment in the Texas Water Fund to support projects that repair, upgrade, and expand the state's water infrastructure systems; and \$135 million to the Texas Department of Emergency Management.

EDUCATION

The 89th Regular Session brought major changes to education, including a historic investment of \$8.5 billion in public schools and the creation of a new school voucher program (SB 2). The school finance bill that passed (HB 2) includes increased investments in teacher compensation, special education, early childhood education, and school safety. The bill also provides a modest \$55 increase to the basic allotment—the foundational per-student funding schools receive—which falls far short of both the House’s earlier \$395 proposal and the \$1,300 school leaders said was needed to keep pace with inflation. This flexible funding source is critical for covering core district needs, from teacher salaries to classroom materials.

Early childhood education, including early literacy and numeracy received a lot of attention this year, with several efforts focused on improving coordination and data sharing (HB 3963 and HB 117) across the state’s fragmented early childhood education (ECE) system. The school finance package (HB 2) also includes changes to how Early Education Allotment dollars are distributed—which are partly based on pre-k attendance currently. Unfortunately, the bill also includes measures that may complicate tuition-based pre-k programs and limit the ability of districts to expand classroom capacity, potentially hindering efforts to increase early learning opportunities.

The Legislature also took major steps to modernize our state’s high school education system and strengthen pathways to college and career for Texas students. New laws (HB 2, HB 120, SB 1786) set statewide goals for post-secondary and workforce readiness, expand access to career-aligned high school models, and improve alignment between dual credit programs and local labor market needs. These changes aim to ensure more Texas students leave high school equipped for college or a quality job.

Passed

Early Education & Out of School Time

HB 117 by Rep. Schoolcraft creates the Governor’s Task Force on Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care to address governance and operational challenges within our state’s early childhood system.

HB 2310 by Rep. Ordaz requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to develop a strategic plan to improve early learning and educational opportunities for young children with disabilities or developmental delays.

Passed

Student Health & Wellbeing

SB 25 by Sen. Kolthorst requires daily physical education for K–8 students and prohibits using physical activity (like PE, recess, or sports) as punishment. It also mandates nutrition education for high school and college students and updated nutrition training for Texas health professionals and medical students.

SB 207 by Sen. Paxton requires schools to excuse student absences for mental health appointments.

SB 314 by Sen. Hughes prohibits certain food additives in school-provided free and reduced-price meals.

SB 1952 by Sen. Paxton clarifies administration and oversight of the Medicaid School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program, which reimburses schools for providing health-related services—like therapy and nursing—to Medicaid-eligible students with disabilities receiving special education services.

SB 2398 by Sen. Campbell requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to create a list of academic accommodations for students with concussions or brain injuries and mandates school districts to adopt concussion response policies.

HB 6 by Rep. Leach makes several changes to school discipline policies, including increasing allowable in-school suspension days to 10, removing mandatory Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placement for vape possession, and funding virtual DAEPs. The bill permits out-of-school suspensions for students pre-K through 2nd grade.

HB 33 by Rep. McLaughlin – known as the Uvalde Strong Act—aims to strengthen school security, law enforcement training, and mental health resources for first responders through updates to multiple education and government codes.

HB 367 by Rep. Rosenthal allows students to have excused absences due to serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment.

HB 3062 by Rep. Guerra requires public colleges and universities to provide education on drug poisoning, fentanyl prevention, suicide prevention, and substance use to all first-semester undergraduate students.

Pathways to College & Career

SB 37 by Sen. Creighton restructures higher education governance by granting university governing boards increased control over curriculum decisions and top administrative hires. Requires public universities to regularly review general education courses for alignment with workforce needs and civic outcomes and establishes a state-appointed committee to recommend core curriculum.

SB 365 by Sen. Eckhardt allows Texas public colleges and universities the option to waive college courses taken five to ten years prior for admission purposes under the Academic Fresh Start law, expanding from the current 10-year minimum.

SB 769 by Sen. Zaffirini directs the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to study and report on access and accommodations for college students with disabilities, including enrollment trends, support services, and institutional policies.

SB 1191 by Sen. Creighton requires a standard method for calculating high school GPAs across all Texas public schools, ensuring consistent weighting for advanced courses like AP, IB, and dual credit.

SB 1786 by Sen. Creighton strengthens education-to-workforce alignment by refining community college finance, improving wage outcome reporting, and requiring stronger Tri-Agency coordination on career and technical education (CTE) grants. It also clarifies the definition of “credentials of value” and introduces regional labor demand analysis.

SB 2314 by Sen. Creighton creates My Texas Future, an online platform to assist public high school students with college admissions and financial aid.

HB 20 by Rep. Gates creates the Applied Sciences Pathway program to let students earn high school diplomas and higher education certificates at the same time.

HB 120 by Rep. Bell increases funding for career and technical education by raising per-student P-TECH funding and expanding caps for rural education and facility allotments. The bill also expands Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program eligibility.

HB 1211 by Rep. Lujan raises the age limit on Texas’s college tuition waiver for youth who age out of foster care.

HB 2081 by Rep. Bucy establishes the Building Better Futures Program to support educational and occupational skills training opportunities and support services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at public and private institutions of higher education.

Passed

Public School Investments

SB 260 by Sen. Huffman increases the school safety allotment to \$20 per student (ADA) and \$33,540 per campus.

SB 568 by Sen. Bettencourt updates how Texas funds special education by focusing on the level of services students receive instead of where they are placed. It updates funding for services and evaluations, requires annual outcome reporting, and creates grants to support students with autism, dyslexia, and parent-directed services.

SB 2185 by Sen. Hinojosa creates an allotment of approximately \$10 million to support bilingual education programs.

HB 2 by Rep. Buckley provides \$8.5 billion in new funding for Texas public schools, including a \$55 per-student increase to the basic allotment that districts can use for salaries, operations, instructional materials, and more. It also funds teacher pay raises based on experience, expands special education support, and invests in educator preparation, school safety, early childhood learning, and district operations.

Other Education Bills:

SB 2 by Sen. Creighton creates a state-funded Education Savings Account (ESA) program, offering up to \$10,000 per student annually (or \$11,500 for students with disabilities) for private school tuition and other approved educational expenses. The program prioritizes students with disabilities and those from lower-income families and is capped at \$1 billion in state funding for the 2026–27 biennium.

SB 12 by Sen. Creighton establishes new requirements for school districts related to parental access and consent, including grievance procedures, curriculum opt-outs, and student records. The bill also prohibits public schools from adopting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, training, or policies not required by federal law.

SB 13 by Sen. Paxton establishes new procedures for school libraries, including the creation of a “library advisory council”, processes for challenging content, definitions of “harmful,” “indecent,” and “profane” materials, and more parental access to library catalogs and checkout records.

Passed

SB 57 by Sen. Zaffirini requires schools to develop a plan to provide accommodations for students with disabilities during emergency drills.

SB 204 by Sen. Paxton requires TEA to create and publish a handbook outlining all parental rights related to their child's education, which must be made available on the agency's website .

SB 569 by Sen. Bettencourt allows public school districts and charter schools to offer virtual and hybrid learning options to students.

SB 870 by Sen. Birdwell allows school marshals to openly carry handguns when in uniform.

SB 991 by Sen. Bettencourt defines chronic absenteeism and requires schools to track and report data on chronically absent and truant students.

SB 2786 by Sen. Creighton exempts certain students from Texas Success Initiative assessment requirements.

HB 27 by Rep. King requires students to have at least half a credit in personal financial literacy and one credit in economics, world geography, or world history to meet graduation requirements.

HB 100 by Rep. Leo-Wilson prohibits schools from using or purchasing instructional materials that have been rejected by the State Board of Education (SBOE).

HB 824 by Rep. Jones requires the SBOE to include civics instruction in high school government curriculum, covering roles of elected officials, voting processes, election laws, eligibility requirements, Robert's Rules of Order, and local representation.

HB 1178 by Rep. Cunningham requires the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to issue temporary teaching certificates immediately to out-of-state certified educators applying for Texas certification.

HB 1188 by Rep. Manuel requires school districts to provide parents of students with intellectual disabilities or developmental delays, at their first IEP meeting, information about services and benefits available through local disability authorities and federal waiver programs.

Passed

HB 1481 by Rep. Fairly prohibits students from using cell phones during the day on school campuses.

HB 2757 by Rep. Frank allows school boards to adopt their own policy determining a child's school entry age when the child's parent is an active-duty member of a foreign military stationed in Texas.

Key Budget Items (PK-12): \$8.5 billion investment in public education, including over \$3.7 billion for teacher pay increases, \$1.3 billion to help districts with basic costs like utilities, insurance, and transportation, \$850 million for special education funding, \$430 million for school safety, \$677 million for early learning in reading and math, \$153 million for college, career, and military readiness and CTE (including P-TECH and R-PEP), \$190 million for charter school facility funding; \$13.3 million increase to extend free lunch to more Texas qualified students; \$170.2 million to make the Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) program available to any school district in the state

Key Budget Items (Higher Educations): \$89.5 million in increased funding for Texas Higher Education Coordination Board (THECB) to cover additional needs related to HB 8 (community college finance reform) by the 88th Legislature; increased investments in student financial aid that will enable 68% of eligible students to receive support through the TEXAS Grants, TEOG, and TEG programs;

HEALTH

Health care was not a top priority during the 89th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature. Unlike previous sessions—which delivered major investments in the state’s psychiatric hospital system, modest postpartum Medicaid expansion, and increased mental health funding following the Uvalde tragedy—this session saw relatively limited movement in this area. Lawmakers approved some notable bills and budget items, but many important bills that were priorities for Texas communities did not make it across the finish line.

Limited progress was made on ensuring Texans have access to affordable, quality health care. HB 321 by Rep. Bucy, which would have streamlined Medicaid and CHIP enrollment for eligible kids using existing data from programs like SNAP did not pass. However, the Legislature approved about \$800 million to modernize the state’s outdated eligibility system—TIERS—and increase staffing to speed up processing for Medicaid, CHIP, and SNAP applications— helping families receive timely access to care and food assistance.

Hunger and food insecurity—key drivers of poor health—also saw little progress this session. The Governor vetoed a \$60 million budget rider that would have enabled Texas to implement the federal Summer EBT (Sun Bucks) program in 2027, a benefit already adopted by more than 30 states. In addition, lawmakers filed dozens of harmful bills to restrict SNAP access. A key advocacy win: United Ways of Texas helped narrow SB 379, which, as passed, only prohibits the use of SNAP benefits for sweetened beverages and candy—far less impactful than earlier proposals.

Passed

Mental Health & Behavioral Health

SB 5 by Sen. Huffman establishes the Dementia Prevention Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT) to advance research on dementia, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and related conditions.

SB 12 by Sen. Creighton expands requirements for obtaining parental consent before a student can receive psychological or psychiatric exams, testing, or treatment conducted by school district employees or contractors.

SB 646 by Sen. West expands student loan forgiveness for a broader range of licensed mental health professionals who work in underserved areas or with high-need populations.

SB 800 by Sen. Zaffirini requires postsecondary institutions to include a video in orientation programs that clearly highlights contact information, office locations, and services of Title IX coordinators.

Passed

SB 897 by Sen. Blanco reduces the grant match requirement from 100% to 50% for mental health programs serving veterans and their families in large counties (over 250,000 residents), improving access to care.

SB 1401 by Sen. West establishes Texas Mental Health Profession Pipeline to increase the number of licensed mental health professionals by supporting students pursuing degrees in mental health fields.

SB 1563 by Sen. Menéndez requires the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in partnership with the Texas Veterans Commission to develop training for county jailers on how to effectively interact with veterans in the criminal justice system.

SB 2308 by Sen. Parker establishes a state grant program to support FDA-approved clinical trials using ibogaine as a potential treatment for opioid use disorder, co-occurring substance use disorders, and other neurological or mental health conditions.

HB 18 by Rep. VanDeaver requires the Texas Child Mental Health Consortium to create the Rural Texas Pediatric Mental Health Access Program, aimed at supporting rural hospitals and clinics in providing behavioral health services for children and perinatal patients, improving access to specialized mental health care in rural communities.

HB 35 by Rep. Thompson establishes the Texas First Responder Peer Network to provide confidential mental health peer support for firefighters and EMS personnel, modeled after the existing network for law enforcement.

HB 37 by Rep. Plesa establishes a perinatal bereavement care initiative through the Texas Department of State Health Services to support families after stillbirth or neonatal loss.

HB 114 by Rep. Cortez transfers the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance Grant Program that provides mental health services for veterans and their families to the Texas Veterans Commission.

HB 2809 by Rep. Rose requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to report suicide attempts by children in its managing conservatorship in its annual public report and to notify a child's parent within a set timeframe following an attempt.

HB 3062 by Rep. Guerra requires public colleges and universities to provide education on drug poisoning, fentanyl prevention, suicide prevention, and substance use to all first-semester undergraduate students, ensuring they receive critical health and safety information early in their college experience.

Passed

HB 5342 by Rep. Oliverson establishes a trust fund to support the sustainability of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Texas and to support mobile crisis outreach teams across the state.

Health Coverage & Access to Services

SB 896 by Sen. Blanco extends the enrollment period for newborns in parents' health insurance plans from 31 to 60 days, giving new parents more time to complete coverage for their child. SB 1409 by Sen. Parker allows public universities to offer "higher education health benefits" – student health plans that are exempt from traditional state insurance regulations and similar to the Farm Bureau plans and Texas mutual plans approved previously by the Legislature.

HB 18 by Rep. VanDeaver establishes a rural hospital grant program to support workforce recruitment and retention—especially OB-GYNs, emergency physicians, and nurses—and to improve maternal health access through expanded services, telehealth, and critical care transport.

HB 541 by Rep. Shaheen clarifies and expands the legal framework for direct patient care arrangements between patients and healthcare professionals in Texas.

HB 1052 by Rep. Bhojani requires insurers to cover telehealth services delivered from out-of-state if the patient lives in Texas and the provider holds a Texas license.

HB 1965 by Rep. Garcia, J. requires the Texas Veterans Commission, in collaboration with the Health and Human Services Commission, to study ways to improve access to mental health services through the Military Veteran Peer Network.

HB 3000 by Rep. King creates the Rural Ambulance Service Grant Program to help fund ambulance purchases in rural counties with fewer than 68,750 residents. Eligible counties can receive up to \$500,000 based on need, distance to trauma centers, and local financial capacity

HB 3800 by Rep. Orr requires HHSC to establish a local health workforce advisory board to develop a resource guide that strengthens collaboration between health care providers and higher education institutions to address health care workforce shortages.

HB 3801 by Rep. Orr establishes the Health Professions Workforce Coordinating Council and a workgroup on nursing career pathways.

HB 4224 by Rep. Hull requires healthcare providers to clearly post instructions—both online and onsite—on how patients can request medical records and file complaints.

Passed

Maternal & Child Health and Healthy Families

SB 1388 by Sen. Kolkhorst clarifies that private medical or mental health care providers, government, and quasi-government entities are not eligible to receive Thriving Texas Families funds.

SB 1946 by Sen. Zaffirini creates a family violence criminal homicide prevention task force.

HB 26 by Rep. Hull allows Medicaid MCOs to offer nutrition counseling and instruction as an “in lieu of service” (ILOS) benefit and establishes a pilot program allowing Medicaid to cover medically tailored meals for pregnant women to support healthier pregnancies.

HB 136 by Rep. Hull expands Medicaid benefits to include lactation support services for new mothers.

HB 713 by Rep. Howard improves efficiency in maternal health oversight by streamlining how the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee accesses and reviews death data.

HB 3284 by Rep. Frank creates the Texas Commission on Marriage and Family to review laws, policies, and state programs affecting marriage and family formation, and to make recommendations to the legislature based on its findings.

HB 3940 by Rep. Johnson enhances newborn health coverage by requiring HHSC to annually remind healthcare providers and Medicaid plans that a mother’s Medicaid ID may be used for newborn care reimbursement if the baby hasn’t been assigned an ID.

HB 5155 by Rep. Rose extends the Medicaid Maternal Opioid Misuse (MOM) model, which improves care access and quality for pregnant women with opioid use disorder.

Other Health Bills:

SB 10 by Sen. Paxton authorizes the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) to establish an anti-human trafficking unit, identify businesses affected by trafficking, and coordinate efforts with law enforcement, the attorney general, and community partners.

SB 25 by Sen. Kolkhorst establishes new food product labeling requirements and mandates continuing education on nutrition and metabolic health for licensed physicians, physician assistants, nurses, and dietitians. It also requires these healthcare professionals to provide dietary counseling to patients based on advisory committee guidelines.

SB 916 by Sen. Zaffirini extends ban on ambulance surprise bills.

Passed

HB 39 by Rep. Ray Lopez requires the Texas Department of State Health Services to share de-identified suicide and homicide data on veterans with the Texas Veterans Commission for annual report to guide prevention efforts.

HB 107 by Rep. Simmons creates a statewide sickle cell disease registry at the Texas Department of State Health Services to improve tracking, treatment, and research of the disease.

HB 216 by Rep. Harris enhances transparency and patient rights in medical billing. It requires healthcare providers to give patients a written, itemized bill detailing specific charges whenever payment is requested after services or supplies are delivered.

HB 451 by Rep. Thompson expands the utilization of screening for risks or signs of commercial sexual exploitation to all children who are in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or under the jurisdiction of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD).

HB 742 by Rep. Thompson requires first responders and certain healthcare workers to complete approved human trafficking prevention training. It directs HHSC to maintain a list of approved courses and mandates hospitals and emergency facilities to display training notices and protect employees who report suspected trafficking in good faith.

HB 754 by Rep. Thompson requires medical assistants to complete approved training on identifying and reporting human trafficking. It also mandates healthcare facilities to post signage with trafficking information and prohibits retaliation against employees who report suspected trafficking in good faith.

HB 1314 by Rep. Hickland requires healthcare facilities to provide patients with a written estimate for elective procedures within five business days of a request. If final charges exceed the estimate by \$400 or more, the facility must include instructions on how to dispute the bill. Noncompliant facilities cannot pursue collections or report the debt to credit agencies.

HB 1894 by Rep. Metcalf designates November as Veterans Month in the state of Texas.

HB 3376 by Rep. Capriglione requires an annual one-hour training for certain guardians on aging, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and related disorders. The requirement applies if the person under guardianship is 60 or older, or if they are under 60 and diagnosed with Alzheimer's, dementia, or a related condition.

Passed

Key Budget Items for Health Coverage & Access to Care: \$139 million to upgrade the state's aging eligibility system—Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS); \$2.4 billion to increase base wage for personal care attendants to \$13/hr.; \$40 million for the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Incubator Program that helps nonprofits expand access to comprehensive care for uninsured and underserved Texans

Key Budget Items for Mental & Behavioral Health: \$10.41 billion for behavioral health funding across various state agencies and an additional \$214.9 million for specific mental health projects included in the supplemental budget (HB 500); \$55 million for the Community Mental Health Grant Program; \$5 million increase for the Healthy Community Collaboratives program to provide services to persons experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, or mental illness; \$40 million increase for Youth Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams; \$3 billion for the Dementia Prevention Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT), subject to voter approval; \$28 million for the Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals; and \$5 million for the Behavioral Health Innovation Grant Program

Key Budget Items for Maternal & Child Health: Funding maintained for Healthy Texas Women, Family Planning Program, and Breast and Cervical Cancer Services totaling \$460 million over the biennium and includes \$20 million for Women's Preventative Mobile Health Units (MHUs) to reach underserved and unserved rural communities; \$5 million in GR for grants supporting maternal health programs to reduce obstetric complications and boost participation; \$5.6 million in GR to support improvements to the state's Maternal Mortality Review System and the Maternal and Child Health Quality Improvement System; \$6 million to support the SNAP Double-Up Bucks program;

Key Budget Items for Prevention & Early Intervention, Healthy Families, Child Welfare, and more: \$18 million increase for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services; level funding for Family Support Services; \$60 million in new funding for Thriving Texas Families; \$1 million increase for Fatherhood EFFECT; and \$1million increase for Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF)

FINANCIAL SECURITY

During the 89th Texas Legislative Session, United Ways of Texas advocated for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households across the state. While we successfully secured several key wins to support working families, strengthen the workforce, and expand access to critical services, progress in other areas—particularly housing stability and transportation access—fell short of what is needed to ensure financial security for all Texans.

Child care was a top priority for policymakers this session, and strong advocacy by United Ways of Texas and partners helped secure \$100 million in subsidies to reduce waiting lists and expand access. Lawmakers also passed measures to strengthen the child care sector by supporting provider sustainability, improving data transparency, and strengthening reimbursement rates for high-quality child care programs.

While the Legislature took steps to address housing costs and increase supply—such as streamlining regulations to allow more homes on smaller lots (SB 15) and encouraging development through land use and zoning reforms (SB 840, SB 2477, HB 21)—lawmakers made little progress in expanding rental assistance, affordable housing for workers (SB 208), eviction prevention, or other supports for Texans struggling to stay housed. There was also a strong legislative push that threatened tenants’ rights under the false pretense of protecting property owners from “squatters.” Most concerning, SB 38 originally included some of the most anti-tenant provisions ever introduced in Texas—ranging from lightning-fast evictions with no hearing to undermining legal aid and allowing landlords to shop for sympathetic judges. Thanks to strong advocacy by local United Ways and other community-based nonprofits, as well as statewide partners and United Ways of Texas, the most harmful provisions were removed or significantly weakened.

Passed

Child Care

SB 462 by Sen. Kolkhorst gives priority on the child care subsidy waitlist to the children of eligible child care educators, improving access for the early education workforce.

SB 1265 by Sen. Alvarado requires the Texas Workforce Commission to provide child care resources and best practices to employers.

HB 599 by Rep. Thompson reduces local regulatory barriers to help licensed and registered child care homes operate and expand more easily.

Passed

HB 2294 by Rep. Thompson allows workforce boards to reimburse Texas Rising Star child-care providers at the maximum state rate, supporting more access to high quality care for eligible families.

HB 3963 by Rep. Capriglione and SB 2184 by Sen. Paxton) establishes an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) to track enrollment trends, identify service gaps, and inform more effective early childhood policies and programs.

HB 4529 by Rep. Hefner allows DOD-certified child care providers to operate without separate state licensing, which aims to increase access to care for military families in Texas.

Workforce Development

SB 856 by Sen. Flores SB 856 adds the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station to the list of entities eligible to use the Skills Development Fund for workforce training.

SB 1080 by Sen. West allows incarcerated Texans who complete education and training programs to earn a provisional occupational license, helping improve their employment opportunities after release.

SB 1143 by Sen. Blanco strengthens support for disconnected youth ages 14–24 by requiring local workforce boards to set goals, improve coordination, and track outcomes for federally funded job training programs.

SB 1535 by Sen. Zaffirini directs the Texas Workforce Commission to develop a statewide training program for high-demand jobs in the nuclear energy sector, creating school-to-career pathways, new technical programs, and industry partnerships to address workforce shortages, with annual progress reports to the Legislature.

SB 1728 by Sen. Perry allows juvenile justice education programs at the state and local levels to apply for funding through the JET Grant Program, supporting efforts to help youth in the system successfully reintegrate into their communities.

SB 1786 by Sen. Creighton allows incarcerated students in the Windham School District to take free dual credit courses while finishing their high school education.

SB 2405 by Sen. Parker includes provisions that support expanding education and job training programs in prisons to help inmates gain skills for employment after release, while promoting coordination of health and support services to aid successful reentry.

Passed

SB 2448 by Sen. Sparks allows the Texas Workforce Commission to fund nonprofits rural communities align education and workforce goals—strengthening job training, college readiness, and pathways to high-demand careers in fields like agriculture, healthcare, and technology.

HB 11 by Rep. Phelan simplifies the process for out-of-state skilled professionals—such as HVAC technicians, electricians, and plumbers—to obtain licensure in Texas.

HB 322 by Rep. Guillen expands JET (Jobs and Education for Texans) Grant fund uses to include subscription-based tech tools like Virtual Reality training, helping schools enhance career readiness.

HB 2768 by Rep. Capriglione establishes a state-recognized IT apprenticeship credential, allowing agencies to partner with colleges to train talent and fill IT roles—offering a pathway that can substitute for a four-year degree in certain state jobs.

HB 3260 by Rep. Bell redefines qualifying apprenticeship programs for Texas by allowing the Texas Workforce Commission to recognize or certify programs under its own rules, rather than relying on federal approval from the U.S. Department of Labor.

HB 3698 by Rep. Vo requires certain unemployment benefit recipients to take part in reemployment services if they're identified as needing help finding work, making it a condition to keep receiving benefits.

HB 3699 by Rep. Vo updates the definition of “last work” and “last employer” in unemployment claims to exclude short-term employment of 30 hours or more with non-covered employers, aligning eligibility determinations more closely with traditional employment relationships.

HB 3923 by Rep. Bell directs state agencies to remove bachelor's degree requirements for positions where a degree is not essential.

HB 4848 by Rep. Harris-Davila requires each Texas public higher education system to offer at least one competency-based bachelor's degree in a high-demand field, with total student costs capped at \$10,000, adjusted annually for inflation.

HB 5629 by Rep. Wilson streamlines occupational licensing for military spouses by allowing them to practice in Texas if they hold a similar license from another jurisdiction, without needing to meet state-specific requirements. It also waives application and exam fees for military spouses and removes residency documentation requirements.

Passed

Housing

SB 15 by Sen. Bettencourt restricts large Texas cities from enforcing minimum lot sizes above 1,400 sq ft (or width/depth limits) and minimum density rules below 31.1 units/acre on new subdivisions larger than five acres—aimed at boosting housing supply.

SB 38 by Sen. Bettencourt speeds up the eviction process in cases without disputed facts (primarily squatters) and provides modest “right to cure”.

SB 617 by Sen. Schwertner requires cities to hold a public hearing and notify nearby residents before converting city property into housing for people experiencing homelessness, allowing residents to challenge the decision if those steps aren’t followed.

SB 785 by Sen. Flores requires Texas municipalities to allow new HUD-code manufactured homes in at least one residential zoning district, limiting local restrictions that exclude these homes, and sets a 45-day deadline for approval of installation applications, with exemptions for historic districts and existing deed restrictions.

SB 840 by Sen. Hughes streamlines the conversion of existing commercial buildings to housing by allowing mixed-use and multifamily residential development “by right” in areas zoned for office, commercial, retail, or warehouse use.

SB 2137 by Sen. Menéndez prevents the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) from using school ratings of nearby public schools to evaluate housing tax credit applications and requires a study on the impact of this change.

SB 2477 by Sen. Bettencourt requires cities to allow the conversion of office buildings into mixed-use or multifamily residential housing through an administrative approval process.

HB 21 by Rep. Gates reforms housing finance corporations by enforcing local approval, rent reductions, income limits, voucher acceptance, annual audits, and stronger tenant protections to ensure accountability and affordable housing outcomes.

HB 2525 by Rep. Darby protects property tax exemptions for charitable organizations providing housing and services to Texans aged 62 and older, ensuring funds support their mission rather than taxes.

Passed

Financial Coaching, Fair Lending, and Education

SB 1697 by Sen. Blanco protects consumers from misleading solar energy sales by requiring the Public Utility Commission of Texas to publish an online guide that helps homeowners choose systems that fit their needs and budget.

HB 27 by Rep. King amends current law relating to courses in personal financial literacy for high school students in public schools.

HB 4655 by Rep. Hull expands the Transitional Living Services Program for foster youth by requiring foster care providers to educate transitioning youth on financial literacy, housing, and public assistance enrollment, including topics like payday loans, rental contracts, and accessing public benefits.

Other Financial Security

SB 379 by Sen. Middleton prohibits the use of SNAP benefits to purchase sweetened beverages and candy.

SB 1238 by Sen. Kolkhorst protects widowed individuals from insurance discrimination by ensuring they maintain the same coverage and rates they had while married, helping prevent unfair financial burdens after the loss of a spouse.

SB 1923 by Sen. West ensures that child support payments continue to follow the child when placed with a nonparent adult caregiver under an authorization agreement.

HB 334 by Rep. Ordaz allows counties to create a family leave pool, enabling employees to donate unused leave to support coworkers during emergencies, childbirth, adoption, or serious illness—providing critical flexibility and support in times of need.

HB 1041 by Rep. Turner prohibits paid caregivers from being named as beneficiaries on life insurance policies for individuals they care for, aiming to prevent conflicts of interest and protect vulnerable Texans.

HB 4238 by Rep. Meyer streamlines access to debt collection protections for victims of identity theft, coercion, domestic violence, and human trafficking—helping vulnerable adults more easily clear fraudulent debts without needing to hire an attorney.

Passed

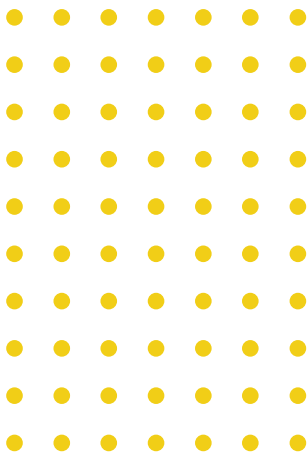
Key Budget Items:

\$106.8 million in funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to serve additional eligible children through the childcare assistance program; \$68 million to credit the state's Unemployment Compensation Fund; \$31 million for vocational rehabilitation; \$142.3 million for community housing projects under the General Land Office and Veterans Land Board; an additional \$397.1 million for the Texas Veterans Homes Administration Fund; funding to increase the base wage for personal attendant services to \$13.00 per hour.

CLOSING

The 89th Regular Session brought new challenges and required Texas United Ways to play more defense than ever before. Still, thanks to the engagement and advocacy of local United Ways, their partners, and advocates across the state, we helped advance key priorities in educational opportunity, healthy community, financial security, and community resiliency. As we shift from session to implementation, United Ways of Texas will remain engaged to ensure that new policies are rolled out in ways that benefit our communities. We'll support our members in navigating changes, sharing input during rulemaking, and advocating at the local level.

Looking ahead, we will deepen our engagement on federal issues—including Congressional advocacy around SNAP, Medicaid, Skills Training, EITC/Child Tax Credit, 211, and Charitable Giving Incentives. Together, we will continue to raise community voices and advance meaningful, systems-level change for a stronger Texas.



TAKE ACTION

Turning Legislative Wins into Local Impact

The end of the Regular Session of the 89th Texas Legislature marks an important milestone for communities across our state—but it's just the beginning. With several legislative wins aligning with United Way's core priorities, including financial stability, early childhood education, and community resiliency, the real opportunity now lies ahead—turning those policy wins into real change at the local level.

Advocacy doesn't end when the Legislature gavel out. In fact, it's only the beginning. Now is the time to stay engaged—by supporting bill implementation, tracking interim hearings, and advancing local priorities that align with your mission. Whether you're a United Way team member, community partner, donor, or board member, you play a vital role in translating legislative outcomes into clear, local action. As a local United Way, you are a trusted messenger with deep connections to community members/voices, partners, and decision makers. You are uniquely positioned to interpret policy wins in ways that matter to your community, identify remaining gaps, and lead efforts to create lasting change. State policy may be shaped in Austin, but its power is felt on the ground—in your cities, counties, and neighborhoods.

We especially encourage United Ways across Texas to have strategic conversations with leadership about your long-term advocacy goals. Establishing clear guidelines, priorities, and expectations will empower staff, boards, and volunteers to engage consistently and effectively. Many of our peers are already leading with bold local and regional agendas—we invite more of you to do the same.

By building on this momentum, we can ensure that legislative progress truly reaches those who need it most—especially ALICE households—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These families are working, often full time, but still struggle to afford basic necessities like housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care.





TAKE ACTION

Ready to Take Action? Here's What You Can Do

Local action doesn't have to be big to be effective. Consider taking one or more of the following steps:

- Host a community briefing or town hall to highlight local needs and share recent policy outcomes.
- Submit an op-ed or letter to the editor to raise awareness about key issues impacting ALICE families and your community.
- Meet with elected officials or their staff in their district offices or at United Way events.
- Create and share local impact data and/or graphics using ALICE or 211 data to make your case.
- Training your board, staff, or affinity groups on advocacy basics

Looking to go deeper? These steps can help you expand and strengthen your year-round advocacy efforts

- Conduct a relationship-mapping exercise with your board, staff, or affinity groups to identify connections with policymakers.
- Engage your board, volunteers, and affinity groups like Women United, Tocqueville, or Young Leaders in setting local advocacy priorities.
- Form a Public Policy Task Force to guide your United Way's advocacy work throughout the year
- Engage local service groups in legislative awareness and action
- Participate in local budget processes or city/county proclamations to raise visibility for your issues.
- Invite elected officials to your board meetings or community events to build relationships and brief them on key priorities.
- Thank your lawmakers for their service and highlight your shared priorities.

Together, we can move from policy to progress—and from session wins to systems change—all year long.

📞 211 Texas: A Critical Resource for Action & Insight

While priority legislation to modernize 211 (HB 38) did not pass this session, 211 Texas, continues to be one of the most valuable tools for understanding and responding to community needs in real time.

Every year, millions of Texans call looking for help with housing, food, child care, utilities, health care, and more. These calls don't just connect people to services—they produce real-time data that highlight the real challenges of Texas households and communities.

For United Ways, community partners, and advocates, 211 data is essential. It helps:

- Identify unmet needs and service gaps
- Demonstrate impact of public policies and funding on real families
- Strengthen messaging to funders, lawmakers, and community partners.

Use 211 data—alongside ALICE data— to strengthen your local advocacy, shape implementation conversations, and elevate your United Way's role as an expert, community connector, and problem solver.



ABOUT

United Ways of Texas:

As the voluntary state association for local United Ways in Texas, United Ways of Texas (UWT) creates lasting change in people's lives and in Texas communities by leading and collaborating with a trusted and powerful network of local member United Ways. Together, our network of Texas United Ways is working collaboratively towards a future where all Texans thrive.

uwtexas.org

ALICE:

Asset Limited, Income Constrained (ALICE) is a population of Texans that are employed and yet struggle to afford the basic necessities of housing, food, health care, childcare, technology, and transportation. The Texas ALICE Report provides county-by-county level data and analysis of how many households are unable to make ends meet. The report includes measures, based on present-day income levels and expenses that show how many Texas workers are struggling financially, and why.

unitedforalicetx.org

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