



Early Childhood Education & the 87th Session

children at Risk

HB 2607 (Talarico I Button) & SB 2087 (Lucio)

Ensuring publicly funded child care programs are high-quality with Texas Rising Star

Texas spends hundreds of millions of dollars per year to provide child care for working families. Unfortunately, Texas taxpayers could be getting a bigger impact from that investment.

Texas Rising Star (TRS) is Texas' framework to measure, improve, and communicate the quality of Early Childhood Education providers receiving public money. TRS assesses child care programs across a range of criteria, including staff qualifications, educator-student interactions, curriculum, nutrition, and physical space. Participating providers can be quality certified at three levels: 2-, 3-, and 4-Star by meeting rigorous benchmarks. Participation in TRS is voluntary and only open to child care providers who accept families receiving child care subsidy assistance.



High-quality early education is the foundation to future academic success, especially for children from low-income backgrounds. A young child's brain is malleable, and the elasticity of how the brain develops makes early engagement an excellent buffer to the negative effects associated with growing up in poverty. Access to child care alone is not enough, the state must also work to improve the quality of child care programs available, especially programs who serve low-income children with public funds.



The current voluntary approach to participating in TRS is inadequate to meet the needs of working families and to ensure the effective expenditure of taxpayer dollars. In 2019, roughly 23% of subsidy providers were enrolled in TRS, meaning only about 56,000 children were served daily by a TRS quality rated program in a system that statewide serves 136,000 children. That is just 84 quality-rated subsidy seats per 1,000 children.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Require subsidy providers to participate in Texas Rising Star with a phase-in of the requirements and supports for providers to gradually improve quality. Requiring subsidy providers to become TRS certified will increase transparency and accountability of government dollars while also prioritizing quality. This bill has no fiscal note.

To ensure a smooth transition for providers, a phase-in approach for the subsidy providers currently not participating in TRS is crucial. This approach will allow time to put support systems in place to assist providers. During the phase-in approach, providers should have to access mentorship, professional development, and resources provided by TRS while they fix any licensing or quality deficiencies. Once their deficiencies are alleviated, they shall be eligible to progress to a higher certification level and begin receiving higher reimbursement rates. Under this model, providers will have access to a clear timeline and the professional support necessary to improve the quality of care provided to Texas children.

CHILDREN AT RISK

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The following organizations and individuals are signed on in support.

Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Coalition

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston

Brighton Center

Catholic Charities of Dallas

Circle Up, United Methodist Women

CitySquare

Commit Partnership

Cynthia Pearson, Day Nursery of Abilene

Dallas Early Education Alliance

Dillon Joyce Ltd

Dominican Sisters of Houston

Early Learning Alliance

Early Matters Dallas

Educational First Steps

Family Association of San Antonio, Inc.

First3Years

Hancock Professional Development Resources &
Consulting

Happy Days School

Houston Area Urban League

Ivy Kids- Hobbs

Kaleidoscope Child Development Center, Inc.

Kids Kountry Learning Center

Kids R Kids #5 Texas

Kids R Kids Learning Academy Westpointe

Kids R Kids of Lakeshore

Leslie Fierro - Avance, Inc. National

Momentous Institute

Open Door Preschools, Austin TX

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SAISD Early Childhood

Texans Care for Children

Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

TexProtects

TXPOST

United Way for Greater Austin

United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

United Ways of Texas

Vanguard Academy

YMCA of Greater San Antonio

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