

CHILDREN AT RISK

Priorities for the 2023 Texas Legislature

I. Invest in Quality Early Education and Public Education: Ensure All Children Are Ready for School, College, and Careers

Child Care

Help parents get back to work with affordable high quality child care and pre-k

- Increase Pre-K Partnerships between school districts and private child care providers
- Streamline eligibility for students in Pre-K Partnerships between school districts and private child care providers
- Offer property tax relief to child care providers participating in TWC's scholarship program

Support the child care workforce to support other businesses

- Enact recommendations of House Bill 619 (2021) to support the child care workforce
- Require two-year and four-year institutions of higher education to develop articulation agreements across institutions and child development and education degree plans.

Invest in children to build a Texas for tomorrow

- Create bedrock funding to provide stable income to child care providers serving infants and toddlers, in child care deserts, or are working towards Texas Rising Star Levels 3 or 4.
- Ensure providers receive reimbursements based on the market not regional poverty.

Public Education

- Appropriately allocate funding that supports all public school students including but not limited to early education, economically disadvantaged students and dual-language learners.
- Create a statutory definition of chronic absenteeism, include chronic absenteeism in the "at-risk" category for state funding, and require TEA to report data as an indicator.
- Continue to invest in Pre-K Partnerships and alleviate barriers that prevent public-private partnerships.
- Increase access to quality STEM programs.

II. Invest in Programs and Strategies that Improve Children's Physical, Mental and Social Development

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Maternal and Child Health

- Protect current requirements for immunizations, including requirements for public school entry.
- Improve maternal health in Texas, including expanding 12-month postpartum Medicaid health coverage.
- Increase funding for evidence-based primary prevention, including home visitation programs and Early Childhood Intervention.

Mental Health

- Increase access to school-based behavioral services so more districts can participate, and more students can receive services.
- Set minimum required mental health counselor to student ratios in public schools.
- Provide long-term funding and career pathways for schools to hire more mental health professionals and establish school-based health centers.

Access to Food: Allow internships and college credit hours to count towards SNAP eligibility for college students.

Opportunity Youth: Maximize tax payer dollars and require local workforce boards to include opportunity youth in strategic plans and reporting.

Safety: Allow child care and out-of-school time organizations to be eligible for school-safety money and resources.

III. Protect Human Trafficking Survivors and Increase Penalties for Traffickers

Protection

- Empower and incentivize local district and county attorneys to bring actions against alleged illicit massage businesses.
- Allow outcry in all human trafficking prosecutions involving children.
- Flag Drivers' Licenses for Human Trafficking.
- Add protections for victims of trafficking with significant disabilities.
- Mandate registration of all "white label" ATMs.
- Require Transportation Network Companies to train their drivers on human trafficking.
- Universal human trafficking screening for age-eligible children in foster care.

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Increased Penalties

- Increase penalties for traffickers that use excessive force.
- Enhance child pornography sentences when multiple images are possessed or promoted.
- Require those convicted of Continuous Trafficking to serve aggravated time.

IV. Promote Policies that Increase Equity and Eliminate Systemic Racism in Texas

- Require the Sunset Advisory Commission to assess the agency's efforts to reduce racial disparities when under review.
- Prevent discrimination against natural and protective hairstyles in academic settings throughout the state of Texas.
- Renew funding and re-establish the Office of Minority Health Statistics and Engagement.

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