

2019 STATE POLICY ISSUES

86th Texas Legislature



Worker training, education and deployment are some of the most critical issues the 86th Texas Legislature must address for the state to remain competitive in the global marketplace. The Texas Association of Workforce Boards (TAWB) believes the 86th Texas Legislature should focus on these issues that promote a predictable and reliable business climate, avoiding legislation that distracts from critical priorities. TAWB's policy issues reflect those of the state's 60x30TX Plan, the Texas Public School Finance Commission Outcomes Working Group, the House Select Committee on Economic Competitiveness, and the state's leading business, economic development and education associations.

Priority Issues

- **Increase funding for the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Program to assist public community and technical colleges and independent school districts with start-up costs of equipment purchases or upgrades for CTE programs.** TWC's JET grant program is pivotal in attaining the state's 60X30TX goals. JET funds assist public community and technical colleges and independent school districts with start-up costs related to equipment purchases or upgrades for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs providing training for high-demand occupations.
- **Expand the TWC Skills Development Fund.** Texas' premier job-training program, the Skill Development Fund provides local customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce.
- **Expand apprenticeships and internships for high school and post-secondary students and incentivize and/or remove barriers for businesses.** Apprenticeship and internship programs are a proven approach to meeting growing demand for skilled workers. TAWB's recommendations include:
 - provide **employer tax credits** for employers providing internships for high school and community college students that are aligned to the demand occupations in the local region.
 - increase funding of TWC's **Apprenticeship Training Program (ATP)** to meet the growing demand for skilled workers.
 - increase apprenticeship and internship opportunities for **people with disabilities**
- **Expand dual course study programs, certificate programs and workforce continuing education programs at both high school and middle school levels; Require contact hour reimbursement for community colleges offering dual credit programs toward recognized industry certifications that do not involve college credit courses.** Dual credit is both a proven means for students to earn college credit even while they are still in high school, and a critical element in meeting the state's 60X30TX plan. This affordable alternative usually takes less than one or two years to complete and can boost a worker's earning power by 20% over those with only a high school diploma.
- **Increase the availability of Career & Technology Education (CTE) programs in public community and technical colleges and independent school districts, and the promotion of the opportunities that can result from CTE.** CTE presents the business community with an actionable agenda for solving growing workforce shortages and provides diverse sets of knowledge, skills, and abilities that employers in many industries need to fill crucial jobs.
- **Protect the Economic Development Sales Tax for economic development purposes.** This very important local economic development tool gives smaller Texas communities the financial resources to support projects that focus on primary job creation and community development.

Workforce Training

- Increase state funding for **Adult Basic Education (ABE)** beyond the minimum amount required for Texas to receive federal funding for the programs and expand Accelerate Texas.
- Provide greater **access to training and employment opportunities**, including:
 - **eliminate unnecessary barriers for ex-offenders** to obtain occupational licenses required by the State.
 - permit ex-offenders to access **on-line** training and education and general studies courses.
 - reform the requirements to **shorten/combine curriculum** necessary for obtaining occupational licenses required by the State.

Education

- Encourage/support **partnerships between school districts and employers** such as P-TECH and early college high school academies.
- Increase **science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)** curriculum in elementary and middle schools across the state and ensure that proficient teachers are delivering the curriculum.
- Develop initiatives to increase the number of elementary school students attaining **basic skills** before their exit to middle/intermediate schools, including the abilities to read English on grade level by the conclusion of the 3rd Grade and to perform basic math functions.
- Implement **career education and exploration** initiatives at the middle school level and establish career paths, which may be modified, as needed.

Public School Finance

- Provide **additional support and resources for students of lower economic status**, students with language barriers and students with special needs.
- Provide expanded **teacher quality initiatives** at every level of the education continuum.
- Expand and fund quality **full day early pre-kindergarten** programs.
- Fund **Texas State Technical College** on its full commission rate.
- Increase state formula funding for **Texas community colleges**

Economic Development

- Continue to support state Economic Development Programs, including the **Texas Enterprise Fund**, and **Governor's University Research Initiative**.
- Reauthorize **Chapter 313** of the Texas Tax Code designed to help Texas compete for businesses making large capital investments in the state.
- Maintain **local government control** for public education, economic development and workforce development programs.

About the Texas Association of Workforce Boards

The Texas Association of Workforce Board (TAWB) represents the 28 local workforce development boards in Texas and the more than 700 business and community leaders from communities across Texas who serve on those boards. TAWB's goal is to ensure a highly skilled, well-trained talent supply for Texas employers and an employer-driven workforce system. The hands-on business and workforce development expertise of its board representative members uniquely positions TAWB and its member representatives to advise on education, training and workforce development policies for the state's incumbent and emerging workforce and to assist in building a true employer-driven workforce development system.

Texas Association of Workforce Boards

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