

2021 STATE POLICY ISSUES

87th Texas Legislature



The COVID-19 public health crisis and economic disruption has impacted millions of Texans in every region. Local Workforce Development Boards working on the ground in communities across Texas agree that the demand for services directed to both employers and job seekers will grow to unprecedented levels. As such, an increased and sustained commitment to post-secondary education and workforce training programs are vital to ensure we can respond quickly to current and projected demands for new workers in key industries, while helping those who have lost their jobs as a result of this crisis to transition to new family-supporting jobs. The Texas Association of Workforce Boards (TAWB) believes the 87th Texas Legislature should focus on these issues that promote a predictable and reliable business climate, while avoiding legislation that distracts from critical priorities. TAWB's policy issues reflect those of the state's 60x30TX Plan, and the state's leading business, economic development and education associations.

Priority Issues

- 1. Maintain funding levels for workforce training programs administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in collaboration with Workforce Development Boards and other workforce development partners to respond to the anticipated need for training, re-training and upskilling of Texas' dislocated and incumbent workers, including:**
 - TWC Skills Development Fund
 - TWC Skills Development Fund COVID-19 Special Training Initiative
 - TWC Skills for Small Business Program
 - TWC Career and Education Outreach Specialist Program
 - TWC Apprenticeship Training Program
 - TWC Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Program
 - Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Accelerate Texas
 - Child Care Services
 - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)/Choices services
- 2. Maintain funding levels for public education and public post-secondary institutions to ensure achievement of the goals of the Texas 60x30 Plan targeted to meeting the skilled workforce needs of Texas employers, including:**
 - Public school funding at levels authorized in HB3 by the 86th Texas Legislature.
 - Development of a state broadband plan to expand high speed internet access across the state.
 - Expanded teacher quality initiatives at every level of the education continuum.
 - Increased funding for Texas Community Colleges.
 - Continued funding for Texas State Technical College (TSTC) on its full commission rate.
 - Provide additional support and resources for students of lower economic status, students with language barriers and students with special needs.
 - Expand and fund quality full day early pre-kindergarten programs.

Workforce Training

- Incentivize the development of additional fast-start, fast-finish upskilling programs that award industry-recognized credentials for in-demand occupations as identified by local WDBs.
- Expand apprenticeships and internships and incentivize and/or remove barriers for business participation, including:
 - 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 apprenticeship and internship opportunities for people with disabilities; and
 - incentivize the development of apprenticeships and internships for veterans and require that college credit and credit toward industry certifications be awarded for demonstrated skills arising from the military training of veterans.
- 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.
- Expansion of competency-based training initiatives and practices such as digital badging.

Education

- 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.
- Expand the number of Industry-based Certifications in Texas, including expediting the process related to the Texas Education Agency's approval of Industry-based certifications for public school accountability.
- Encourage/support partnerships between school districts and employers such as P-TECH and early college high school academies.
- 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.
- 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.

Economic Development

- Protect the Economic Development Sales Tax for economic development purposes.
- 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..

About the Texas Association of Workforce Boards

TAWB represents the 28 local workforce development boards in Texas and the more than 700 business and community leaders across Texas who serve as volunteers 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.

Texas Association of Workforce Boards

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