



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

TLCCA Works to Increase Funding for Early Care and Education!

With the 81st Legislature now underway, TLCCA is hard at work fighting for increased funding for licensed childcare. Although every legislative session is different, the work at the Capitol this year is unusual for two major reasons. First, the Texas House of Representatives has a new Speaker, Joe Straus III. He is a San Antonio native and a longtime supporter of quality childcare. The second reason is the economy – and the potential effect the federal stimulus package will have on state expenditures. There are three major vehicles for increased funding that you need to know about:

Senate Bill 21 (House Bill 130)

This legislation is authored by Senator Judith Zaffirini and State Representative Diane Patrick. It would provide, for the first time, formula funding for school districts to partner with licensed childcare to provide full day prekindergarten. Both bills mandate a 20% threshold for partnerships, allow the funds to reimburse partners for the cost of care, and provide a strong appeals process to ensure school districts meet the partnership requirements. Licensed childcare can participate in the partnerships if they are Texas Rising Star (three stars and above), accredited, or School Ready Certified.

House Bill 2072

State Representative Kino Flores is championing increased reimbursement rates for licensed childcare providers. Flores filed a bill that will raise rates for the bottom quartile of all workforce regions. The increased funds must be used for rate increases in those areas. The workforce boards must report on their use of these funds. This is the first legislation aimed at increasing rates as opposed to using new dollars to fund additional children. This bill is a big step in the right direction.

TEA Budget Request Increases Expansion Grant Funds

Education Commissioner Robert Scott is calling for a \$65 million dollar increase for the prekindergarten expansion grant program. Under new rules adopted by him, expansion grant dollars will be used to fund districts that partner with licensed providers and other community stakeholders. Funds from the grants can now be used to cover the cost of care, and the TEA will evaluate partnership plans before approving the grants.

As each of these proposals work their way through the process, TLCCA will fight to ensure licensed childcare is at the table and top of mind for legislative leaders. Be prepared to act when TLCCA sends **Legislative Alerts** asking you to contact your State Senator or Representative on these and other bills that effect our profession. The federal stimulus package will likely fund more subsidized care in Texas, but those funds will be used to cover more children at existing rates. Stayed tuned...

For more details visit www.tlcca.org