

## CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



# Legislative Priorities

At the Center for Public Policy Priorities, we believe in a Texas that offers everyone the chance to compete and succeed in life. Legislative advocacy is one important way we use data and analysis to enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential.

Our bold, research-driven 2015 legislative priorities dare Texas leaders to make Texas the best state for hard-working people and their families.

# Ensuring Health and Wellness

## OUR VISION

*All Texans have meaningful access to affordable health care, and no Texan remains uninsured.*



## OUR WORK

- Maintain or improve support for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Advance a Texas approach to closing the Coverage Gap.
- Maintain or improve resources for, and improve access to, subsidized family planning services; improve provider capacity and coordination among these programs.
- Maintain or improve capacity for mental health and substance abuse services.

*Consumer protections for health coverage in Texas ensure access, quality, and financial protection.*



- Increase resources for ombudsman and consumer assistance capacity for Medicaid Managed Care enrollees.
- End surprise emergency medical billing, and remove consumers from the middle of emergency care billing disputes between insurers and out-of-network providers.

*All Texans with a lived experience of mental illness are able to maintain continuity of care.*



- Establish a pilot program that uses peer support specialists to provide services to inmates transitioning from a correctional setting into a Community Mental Health Center.
- Expand and leverage current continuity of care and case management programs to improve the re-entry process for inmates with mental illness as they are released from local jails.

*All Texans can afford a healthy diet, and food insecurity is a thing of the past.*



- Remove the asset test from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Oppose efforts to restrict SNAP purchases.
- Remove the lifetime ban on drug felons receiving SNAP benefits.
- Remove barriers to the implementation of Community Eligibility, a program that makes it easier for public school students to get free meals at school.
- Create a reward program for schools doing an exemplary job of feeding children.

*Ensure all Texans are informed about, and have access to, the programs for which they qualify.*



- Remove unintended barriers to enrollment in benefit programs resulting from state laws that have not been updated to sync with current federal law.
- Support adequate staffing and investments in Texas benefit eligibility systems.
- Remove the asset test from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program.



# Expanding Economic Opportunity

## OUR VISION

*All Texas students enter kindergarten ready to learn.*



## OUR WORK

- Establish pre-Kindergarten as a full-day program for currently eligible students.
- Identify and remove barriers for Pre-K, Head Start and child care facilities to collaborate.
- Improve quality standards such as class size limits, student-teacher ratios, and health screenings.

*All Texas students and families have the opportunity to acquire financial skills and assets.*



- Expand grantmaking to support household financial education and savings by having more financial services businesses contribute to the Texas Financial Education Endowment.
- Enable schools and school districts to adopt College Savings Accounts (CSAs) and exempt CSAs from resource limits for public benefit program eligibility.
- Support payday and auto title lending reform.

*More Texans, especially economically disadvantaged students, make it through the educational pipeline to achieve a credential or degree.*



- Enhance existing programs for need-based aid directed at two-year and four-year public college students.
- Expand adult education and other job training.
- Defend the Texas Dream Act.

*Expanded access to postsecondary education and workforce training, which increases the number of Texans who are upwardly mobile.*



- Improve programmatic approaches to adult education, SNAP employment and training, the Jobs and Education for Texans grant program, and skills development.

*More Texans earn a living wage.*



- Support efforts to raise the minimum wage, including allowing cities to set base wages higher than the federal minimum wage.

# Investing In Texas

## OUR VISION

*Texas has a state and local revenue system capable of funding necessary public services.*



## OUR WORK

- Prevent arbitrary tightening of the constitutional limits on spending.
- Ensure that appraisals judge all property at full market value.
- Enact progressive property tax exemptions.
- Require a periodic review of existing tax exemptions and preferences, and eliminate tax giveaways that are ineffective, outdated, or unnecessary.
- Enable investment of a certain portion of the “Rainy Day Fund.”
- Reform economic development subsidies to improve transparency and accountability.

*Texas funds its public schools at a level adequate to meet the needs of all students.*



- Require a review of school finance formulas, particularly those affecting low-income students.
- Include inflation adjustments in school finance formulas.
- Increase the base level of funding that supports public schools in Texas.

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At the Center for Public Policy Priorities, we believe in a Texas that offers everyone the chance to compete and succeed in life. We envision a Texas where everyone is healthy, well-educated, and financially secure. We want the best Texas – a proud state that sets the bar nationally by expanding opportunity for all.

CPPP is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. We dare Texas to be the best state for hard-working people and their families.

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