



**EVERY TEXAN**

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

## **Testimony for House Bill 1 (87th Legislature, 2nd Called Session): Appropriations for the Legislature and Legislative Agencies**

Every Texan envisions a Texas where people of all backgrounds can fulfill their potential and contribute to our community. We strengthen public policy to expand opportunity and equity for Texans of all backgrounds -- and while some of our policy recommendations are for our local or federal elected officials, most of them are policies best enacted at the state level, by the Legislature.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that Every Texan wholeheartedly supports House Bill 1's proposed restoration of funding for state legislative agencies' operations. In Texas, where it is the legislature's responsibility to appropriate general revenue and other public funds for education, health care, environmental protection, parks, and other vital services, a prolonged "defunding" of the legislature would eventually mean no funding for any state-supported service.

The completely unwarranted Article X veto by the Governor led to "this insufficiency of funds [that] creates an emergency," as the Legislative Budget Board stated in its budget execution proposal that bought legislative agencies another month before their funding runs out. The Governor's veto jeopardized not just the ongoing services and obligations of legislative agencies and House and Senate offices, but also the economic security of dedicated, hard-working state employees, including their families' health coverage -- during a pandemic, no less.

The demoralizing stress and uncertainty triggered by the Article X veto should not be allowed to happen again. Every Texan therefore also supports amending the Texas Constitution so that it explicitly states that the governor cannot line-item veto or reduce legislative branch funding through budget transfers. Until the Constitution is amended, the 2023 Legislature should also consider, once the regular session begins, enacting a separate appropriations bill for Article X agencies only. Doing this as early as possible and getting it to the Governor's desk in time for a veto to be overridden would ensure the continued, normal operations of legislative agencies. Appropriations needed to continue funding education, health and human services, and all other state functions would remain in the General Appropriations Act.

Every Texan thanks the committee for this opportunity to comment.