Written Testimony to Legislative Budget Board re TWC

Barbara Grant Boneta, Director, Austin/Travis County Success By 6
United Way for Greater Austin
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Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Budget Board:

My name is Barbara Grant Boneta, and I serve as Director of the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Coalition at United Way for Greater Austin. On behalf of the Success By 6 Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of increased state investment in Child Care Services. SX6 brings together over 140 early child organizations, including families, early childhood educators, health care providers, school districts, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and other community partners around a shared goal: that every child in Austin/Travis County enters kindergarten happy, healthy, and prepared to succeed.

Child care is both an early childhood issue and a workforce issue. Texas' Child Care Services program helps eligible families pay for care so parents can work, attend school, or participate in job training, while also supporting the quality of child care available across Texas. In Travis County, we see firsthand what happens when available funding does not keep pace with the needs of working families.

Our community is facing the loss of nearly 600 state-funded Child Care Services slots. Those slots represent nearly 600 children who could lose access to affordable child care and hundreds of parents whose ability to work, remain employed, or pursue education may become significantly more difficult.

Behind every slot is a family making decisions about whether they can afford to go to work. Behind every scholarship is also an early childhood program relying on stable enrollment and public investment to keep classrooms open and educators employed.

Our community has demonstrated how strongly it values child care. Travis County voters approved Raising Travis County, a dedicated investment expected to generate approximately $75 million annually to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care and out-of-school-time programs. Those investments are already helping more families access care, including through scholarships administered in partnership with Workforce Solutions Capital Area.

This advocate participated in programming that equips Texans most impacted by state budget decisions with the knowledge, skills, and support to advocate for policies that strengthen our communities.

But there is still substantial need, and local investment cannot replace the state's responsibility to maintain a strong Child Care Services system.

When state-funded slots disappear while communities are investing millions of local dollars to expand access, we risk using new local resources simply to replace lost state capacity rather than reaching additional families. Instead, state and local investments should build upon one another.

We respectfully urge budget writers to increase funding for Child Care Services in the FY 2028-29 budget so Texas can restore and expand child care scholarship capacity, including the nearly 600 slots at risk in Travis County.

Texas cannot grow its workforce without child care. When parents have reliable, affordable care, they can go to work knowing their children are learning and thriving in safe, nurturing environments. When providers have stable enrollment and adequate reimbursement, they can retain educators and keep classrooms open.

Thank you for your consideration.

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