

March 27, 2025

To: Permanent Subcommittee on Academic and Career-Oriented Education, House Public Education Committee

Re: House Bill 117 by Schoolcraft

Position: For

Chair Ashby and Members of the Committee,

The Commit Partnership appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony for House Bill 117 by Representative Schoolcraft. We strongly support HB 117, which establishes the *Governor's Task Force on the Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care in Texas* and stands to support our state's near- and long-term prosperity.

Texas' early childhood education (ECE) system holds untapped potential to lay foundations for workforce participation from parents while providing high-quality and accessible care for young Texans. A cohesive ECE system is essential to ensuring that the 2.3 million Texas children between the ages of 0-6¹ enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. Despite the immense value to our state and the hard work of many state leaders on this issue, **Texas' ECE system is not yet maximized to reach its potential.** Currently, the state's ECE governance structure is fragmented across multiple agencies, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery, gaps in funding coordination, and challenges in scaling high-quality programs. **There's also a dearth of information available to policy makers.** Ultimately, this has resulted in Texas ranking in the bottom ten states for ECE governance by the Bipartisan Policy Center.² Without a more intentionally structured system, current inefficiencies have material consequences on varying stakeholders:

- **Parents:** Parents navigate a disjointed and burdensome system leaving them without a comprehensive, comparable understanding of all of the opportunities available to them and best suited to meet their needs.
- **Students:** Only 52% of Texas students are entering kindergarten with the foundational skills and knowledge needed to be ready for school, often missing a critical window to build developmental skills that support later outcomes-- a challenge that may be exacerbated by poor governance at the state level.³
- **Early Learning Providers:** Providers must manage requirements ranging from staff credentialing to data reporting and quality standards across multiple state programs that are disconnected. More efficient systems for providers could increase participation in the state's subsidized systems, which can increase access to critical programs.
- **State Agencies:** Multiple agencies with divergent measures and objectives and fractured communication often results in duplicate efforts. Further, agencies lack a comprehensive picture when making strategic choices on how to best administer programs.
- **Texas' Economy:** Texas' economy loses around \$10 billion annually as workers navigate a convoluted industry to meet their childcare needs.⁴ Ultimately, this causes disruptions to work schedules, means employers are unable to fill critical roles, and results in lost productivity for individual businesses and the state as a whole.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates, [Table B09001](#).

² Walsh, B., Smith, L., & Mercado, K. (2023). Integrated Efficient Early Care and Education Systems: Revisiting a State-by-State Analysis. Bipartisan Policy Center.

³ TPEIR. (2024). https://www.texaseducationinfo.org/Home/Topic/texas_public_kg_programs_and_kg_readiness_state

⁴ First Five Years Fund. (2023). 2023 Child Care and Early Education in Texas.

https://www.ffyf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FFYF_Texas_2023.pdf; Sandra Bishop, Ph.D., (2023). "[\\$122 Billion: The Growing Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis](#)," ReadyNation, Council for a Strong America.

Without a near-term focus on governance solutions, the ECE structure will remain siloed and not drive toward the positive outcomes necessary to maximize state investments. HB 117 presents a critical opportunity to address these challenges by identifying recommendations for a more cohesive, effective system.

By establishing a *Governor’s Task Force on Governance on Early Childhood Education and Care*, HB 117 takes a strategic approach by:

- Conducting a comprehensive review of existing early childhood governance structures,
- Identifying opportunities to streamline services, reduce duplication, and improve funding efficiency, and
- Recommending policies to expand access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education.

Given that four of the principal agencies (HHSC, TEA, TWC and DFPS) are led and managed by Governor appointees, the Office of the Governor is well positioned to coordinate the activities of the Task Force and ensure success. HB 117’s proposed model ensures that Texas takes a thoughtful approach to improving ECE governance that incorporates expert perspectives and builds on lessons learned from other states that have developed more effective and accountable ECE systems.⁵ With recommendations from the Task Force due to the Legislature in December of 2026, the bill ensures an opportunity for continued discussion and proposals for specific solutions in the 2027 legislative session. This coherent initiative will help the state build a stronger, more efficient system that better serves Texas families and strengthens our workforce pipeline.

The Commit Partnership urges this subcommittee to support House Bill 117 and advance policies that create a more effective and efficient ECE system in Texas that realizes the outcomes we all want to see in our state. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate to ensure that Texas continues to be a thriving state for business, families, and education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Miguel Solis, President
The Commit Partnership

Supporting Organizations:



⁵ Regeinstein, Elliot. (2020). Early Childhood Governance: Getting There from Here.
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