



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION

2025

STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION PLAN

**PRESENTED TO THE 89TH TEXAS STATE
LEGISLATURE BY THE BRYAN/COLLEGE
STATION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



WELCOME

The Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce has, as its foremost mission, the continuation and cultivation of a vigorous local economy. Through many of its programs, the Chamber enhances the ability of companies in the Brazos Valley to grow and prosper.

As the voice of local business, we take a proactive approach to ensure that those who represent us nationally in Washington D.C., state-wide in Austin, and locally in Bryan/College Station hear about the business interests of our community. The purpose of the State Legislative Action Plan is to summarize the important legislative goals and areas of concern to our community. We respectfully request your support on the issues outlined in this plan.

Please contact the B/CS Chamber of Commerce if you need clarification or additional information.



Karla Castillo
Chair of the Board



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION



Glen Brewer
President/CEO

HEALTHCARE

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF INSURED LIVES

Healthcare operating costs continue to rise, placing unsustainable pressure on many providers. We advocate for expanding access to Medicaid coverage and enhancing Medicaid reimbursement rates by leveraging increased federal dollars. This strategy will both increase the number of insured individuals and provide much-needed financial relief to healthcare providers through higher reimbursement rates.

WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

To tackle the growing shortage of healthcare professionals across Texas, we support continued state funding for expanding healthcare education programs. Additionally, we advocate for the development of innovative state-supported pipeline programs, starting at the high school level. These programs should include incentives for healthcare providers to serve as faculty and instructors, ensuring we have the workforce needed to meet future healthcare demands. Furthermore, we recommend increasing support for Graduate Medical Education (GME) expansion to address physician training needs in the Brazos Valley and other underserved communities across Texas.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

In the Brazos Valley, access to mental health services is limited, leaving patients reliant on large urban facilities with constrained capacity. We call for state support to fund startup initiatives that expand mental health services locally, ensuring patients receive care before reaching a crisis stage. A comprehensive approach to mental health care, covering the full continuum of services, is critical to reducing the burden on law enforcement and emergency departments, as well as lowering overall healthcare costs.

TAXES/REGULATORY

WE SUPPORT ENDING UNFUNDED MANDATES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

State-imposed requirements often create local services without providing necessary funding, which puts additional strain on local government budgets and drives up property taxes for local taxpayers.

WE SUPPORT RESTRICTING NEW AND REDUCING EXISTING STATE REGULATORY BURDENS, TAXES, AND FEES IMPOSED ON TEXAS BUSINESSES.

Excessive regulations at local, state, and federal levels force businesses to increase prices for consumers. Maintaining the current 'No Tax Due' threshold of \$2.47 million on the Texas Franchise Tax is vital to easing the burden on small businesses and driving economic growth across Texas. We also support legislation that promotes business growth and strengthens Texas' competitiveness, including R&D incentives such as sales tax exemptions and franchise tax credits. We encourage collaboration with the Comptroller to potentially extend or increase these incentives, ensuring alignment with federal tax regulations.

WE SUPPORT PRESERVING LOCAL REGULATORY AUTHORITY.


Locally elected officials should be allowed to decide, based on the needs of their constituents, how to provide appropriate services.

WE SUPPORT FAIR, BALANCED PROPERTY TAX REFORM FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL GROWTH

As lawmakers consider reforms, it's crucial to recognize how shifting tax burdens affect both local communities and businesses. We advocate for decisions that prioritize equitable relief without unintended consequences. While property tax relief for Texas homeowners is important, the growing structural imbalance between business and residential contributions must also be recognized. We encourage the Legislature to ensure that any changes are fair, transparent, and based on accurate market values, with adjustments like a business personal property exemption to promote equity across all Texans.



TRANSPORTATION



The Bryan College Station Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with all 15 major transportation planning partners in Brazos County, including local governments, general public transit provider Brazos Transit District and the Texas A&M System, developed the following Transportation Vision for Brazos County: Through community consensus, plan, develop and operate a quality transportation system for people and goods that promotes safety, enhances quality of life and supports economic opportunity throughout Brazos County. We, and our planning partners, believe we are the only metropolitan area in Texas that can claim such a consensus.

The Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce has worked with all our planning partners to leverage local resources to address congestion and transportation safety. This infrastructure need is not just maintenance. Funding must allow for infrastructure expansion in our area of high growth, rapid economic development, and population expansion. With the population of Texas expected to double by 2050, the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce supports:

- Development of I-14 in Texas with a priority on the Brazos County section which includes the I-214 corridor identified in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- Using available legislative tools increase transportation funding for top priority projects across all transportation modes as approved by local elected officials via their Metropolitan Planning Organization and Rural Planning Organization and reinforced by public-private partnerships and regional mobility authorities.
- Development of the High-Speed Rail project which connects Houston to Dallas-Fort Worth with the one station located in Roans Prairie.
- Additional state funding to rural and large urban public transit programs to assist local communities in meeting their mobility needs.
- Using available legislative tools to ensure that the Texas Electrical Grid does not become vulnerable to energy shortages with increased electric vehicle charging during periods of high demand.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PROTECT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SALES TAX FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

The economic development sales tax, commonly known as Type A and B sales tax, meets the needs of both large and small communities. The flexibility provided by this tax gives cities the opportunity for both economic and community development activities, while enabling their community to compete for jobs and investment. The future prosperity of communities in Texas is enhanced by the Type A and Type B sales tax and it has long been the indispensable asset that allowed Texas to remain at the forefront of success in economic development. Projects that received location, expansion, or retention assistance from this sales tax have generated an overall impact of nearly \$110 billion in annual gross state product and nearly 1.2 million jobs.

SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF CHAPTER 313 OF TEXAS TAX CODE

The Texas Economic Development Act (Chapter 313) has helped attract billions in new investment to Texas and helped create thousands of high-paying jobs, while increasing property tax base for school districts and local governments. Chapter 313 allows for a 10-year limitation on the appraised property value for a portion of the school district property tax and in exchange, the business agrees to build or install new property and create jobs in the school district. This act makes money for the state by helping attract and generate new tax revenue from new sources of business activity that otherwise may not be in the state.

SUPPORT CONTINUED FUNDING OF THE TEXAS ENTERPRISE FUND

The Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) has invigorated the states' renewed economic development efforts and allowed Texas to compete globally for new jobs and high-impact investment. Since 2004, the TEF has awarded over \$718 million towards projects creating over 115,600 direct jobs and capital investment of more than \$57 billion. For example, Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies Texas, LLC, a biopharmaceutical manufacturer located in College Station, was instrumental in the production of the Covid 19 vaccine. They received \$1.5 million in FY22-FY23, in which they guaranteed adding an additional 150 jobs and \$300 million in investment in our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR TEXAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Texas Workforce Commission has administered funding to job training programs, such as the Skills Development Fund, the High Demand Job Training Program, and others since its inception. The Skills Development Fund is the only customized job training program for economic development in Texas. Through this fund, 120,947 jobs have been created, 4,572 employers have been helped, and 398,125 workers have been trained. Programs and funds like the Skills Development Fund will continue to pay dividends in this great state for years to come.

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

For Texas to stay competitive in a global economy, it is very important to support and invest in technology and innovation that will lead to business investment and high-paying jobs for Texans. Programs like the Governor's University Research Institute (GURI) and the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) ensure continued innovation and investment in Texas.

PROMOTE AND PROTECT LOCAL CONTROL INCLUDING PRESERVING LOCAL TAX INCENTIVES LIKE CHAPTER 312 OF THE TEXAS TAX CODE

The degree to which local leaders, institutions and governing bodies can make independent decisions about the governance and operation of their community, influences how much a community can shape their own destiny, manage their own growth, and better represent their citizenry. Chapter 312, known as the Property Redevelopment and Tax Abatement Act, allows communities to attract new jobs and grow tax bases without any cost to the state or to local taxpayers. Programs, including Chapter 312, will ensure more successful communities throughout the State of Texas.

PRESERVE CHAPTER 380 AND 381 AGREEMENTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Economic development agreements have empowered both Texas cities and counties to negotiate favorable deals for their residents while attracting investment, development and creating jobs. Chapter 380 of the Local Government Code authorizes municipalities to offer incentives designed to promote economic development such as commercial and retail projects. Chapter 381 of the Local Government Code allows counties to provide incentives encouraging developers to build in their jurisdictions. Using such agreements, cities and counties may promote state and local economic development and stimulate business all at little cost or risk to taxpayers.

TEXAS PUBLIC EDUCATION

SCHOOL FINANCE

- Advocate for an increase in the basic allotment amount per student. The current basic allotment amount is \$6,160 per student and has not seen an increase since 2019. To adjust for inflation alone, the amount would need to be increased by \$1,100 to a new total of \$7,260 per student.
- Support sustainable state funding for HB 3.
- Advocate for local discretion with spending to ensure that the needs of students, staff, and communities are met.
- Support the use of enrollment vs. attendance as the standard for school funding.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- We support ensuring that all private, charter, and home schools that receive state funding are held to the same accountability standards for student performance and financial transparency as public schools.
- Increase the transparency and accountability of private, charter, and home schools that receive state funding.

USE OF PUBLIC TAX DOLLARS

- We oppose any state plan that would divert public tax dollars from public schools to private entities, homeschooled students, or parents with no academic or financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or local communities.

BALLOT LANGUAGE HONESTY

- Allow school district bond and voter-approved tax ratification propositions to include ballot language that accurately informs voters of what the measure seeks to accomplish.
- Current laws surrounding ballot language requirements create confusion and do not allow for clarity.



TEXAS PUBLIC EDUCATION

ACCOUNTABILITY—MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

- Advocate for the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes, one-day, multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that have value for students, parents, and teachers, as well as measures what each community deems important in promoting college and career readiness.
- Advocate for the removal of A–F campus and district ratings that oversimplify the complex work of schools.

SCHOOL SAFETY

- Advocate for increased funding of the School Safety Allotment and local flexibility to ensure districts can adequately meet student and staff safety needs.
- Advocate state funded support for increased counseling services and campus based mental and behavioral health services for students. The academic needs of students cannot be separated from the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students and vice versa.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION- INCREASE SUPPORT

- Elevate the profession of teaching by providing more substantial financial aid and other programs to incentivize students to enter the field.
- Increasing educator and staff compensation
- Improve staff health and retirement benefits
- Decreasing the burdensome state mandates that increase an educator's workload
- Increase state (not district or retiree) support of the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) pension to ensure the system remains solvent and provides for all retirees. Account for Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).

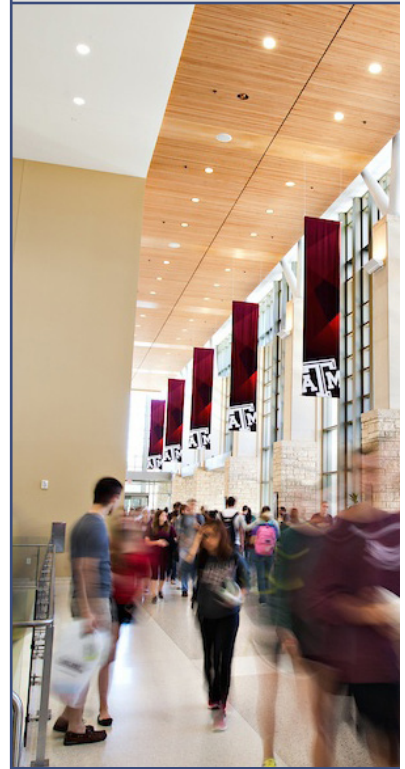


HIGHER EDUCATION

Making a transformational difference is a hallmark of Texas A&M University and Blinn College District students, staff, faculty, and graduates. The legislative priorities of both Texas A&M and Blinn College reflect and reinforce their commitment to continue providing a quality, accessible, and affordable education.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

- We are grateful to the Texas Legislature and the Governor for their collective support provided during the 88th legislative session to address higher education affordability. This support allowed the university to serve its students and maintain standards without shifting the costs to students through increased tuition and fees, made employee retention a priority and helped to keep health insurance premiums constant, and also supported the university's commitment to veterans and their families.
- We would like the 89th Legislature to continue and build upon these investments for key base funding streams:
 - Increase per-student formula funding, specifically to account for added costs per significant enrollment growth.
 - Continue investment in the state's 1943 Hazlewood Act tuition waiver for eligible students by covering costs incurred by universities to honor a 2009 legislative commitment for dependents of military service veterans, known as "legacy" beneficiaries.
 - Continue Higher Ed Group Insurance (HEGI) funding to cover increased enrollments and health care costs and to narrow the funding gap for our employees as compared to state employees covered by ERS.



HIGHER EDUCATION



- Sustainable investment in the university's research programs by enhancing certain funding levels especially increasing the rate for the Texas Research University Fund (TRUF) and maintaining the funding for the Governor's Research University Initiative (GURI).
- With more than half of its students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) or health-related disciplines, Texas A&M University remains uniquely positioned to support the continued growth of the state and the demand for a college-educated workforce in these industries. We hope the legislature will fund our request for additional state dollars to support the hiring of faculty and increased student support services in these critical disciplines.

BLINN COLLEGE DISTRICT

- We support increasing state funding to fully fund the dynamic nature of the new outcomes-based funding formula model established under House Bill 8 in the 88th Legislative Session for both academic and workforce training in order to meet the education needs of Texas students at an affordable rate.
- We support the expansion of workforce training to fill the critical workforce needs of our state and provide ongoing support to the Texas economy.

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES

The continued production of energy and stewardship of our natural resources is vital to a sustainable national and local economy.

ELECTRICITY

- We support preserving local regulatory authority.
- We oppose legislation that would require municipally-owned utilities to transition their customers to customer choice in ERCOT.
- We support easing regulatory requirements to support targeted expansions of the transmission system.
- We oppose legislation that would restrict municipalities and municipally-owned utilities from engaging in the legislative process including, but not limited to, contracting with a legislative professional, paying dues to an association that contracts with one, or by implementing excessive disclosure and reporting requirements.
- We support legislation that would move electric utilities, including municipally-owned utilities and electric cooperatives, to first responder status.

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER

- We oppose legislation that would (1) require Groundwater Conservation Districts to transition groundwater management to a surface-acreage based correlative rights system; or (2) limit the ability of Groundwater Conservation Districts to protect historic use for well owners and their reasonable investment-backed expectations in their water wells.
- We support legislation that would allow a municipality or Special Utility District to count their service territory as part of an area legally controlled as far as acreage and drilling wells, and we oppose legislation that would amend Section 36.116(c), Water Code, to limit the ability of a Groundwater Conservation District to consider the service area and needs of a retail public utility.
- We support legislation that would expand the use of Aquifer Storage and Recovery projects and oppose legislation that would attempt to undermine in any way House Bill 655 passed in the 2015 session, which gave the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) exclusive jurisdiction for regulating and permitting Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR).
- We support continued legislative funding of the Texas Water Development Board's programs for planning and financing implementation of projects in the regional and state water plans, the regional and state flood plans, and for the development of new water resources to support the rapid growth in communities throughout Texas.
- We oppose legislation that would further inhibit the ability of cities to comprehensively plan for and deliver retail water and sewer services in high growth areas outside of the city limits or that would require cities to provide such services in areas where they cannot engage in proper comprehensive planning.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



CONTACT INFORMATION

Karla Castillo

Chair of the Board

KBTX-TV

karla.castillo@kbtv.com

Leighton Schubert

Legislative Affairs Committee Co-Chair

Blinn College

leighton.schubert@blinn.edu

Glen Brewer

President & CEO

Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce

glen@bcschamber.org

Phil Shackelford

Legislative Affairs Committee Co-Chair

Shackelford Consulting

pjshack@gmail.com



For more information, or to receive an electronic copy of this document in English and Spanish, visit bcschamber.org or scan the QR code.

1733 Briarcrest Drive, Suite 200 • Bryan, TX 77802
(979) 260-5200 • www.bcschamber.org



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