

TEXAS COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
Advocacy Action Alert
March 10, 2017
Breaking News and Weekly Update

BREAKING NEWS:

- **Senate Education Committee** has scheduled a meeting on Thursday, March 16th at 9 am in Room E1.028. They will hear TCA's bill SB 490 (Lucio) which will require school districts to report the number of counselors by campus through the PEIMS system. Please make calls between now and Thursday to the members of the [Senate Education Committee](#). If you can come to Austin to sign in or testify in support, that would be very helpful. Please note that the committee will hear three other bills, include SB 3 (Taylor, L) which would establish education savings accounts and tuition assistance plans. SB 3 is very similar to the voucher proposals which will pull funding from public schools and is not supported by TCA.

What Happened This Week: There has been a surge of activity this week as, Friday, March 10th was the last day to file bills for the 85th Legislative Session. Both House and Senate Committees are beginning to pick up steam as bills get referred to committee and then set for hearing.

Dan Huberty, Chairman of the House Public Education Committee, unveiled HB 21, his proposal to address the need to reform Public Education Funding. We included a good story on his proposal in the [TCA Newsline](#) on Thursday. His plan increases funding but does so by moving some revenue streams around. Not everyone agrees with the plan. He will be hearing additional public comment when the House Public Education Committee meets on Tuesday.

Following almost 13 hours of passionate testimony, the Senate State Affairs Committee reported out SB6 on a 7 to 1 vote. This bill now heads to the Senate floor. There is no companion bill in the House.

House County Affairs Committee met on Thursday, 3/9/16 and invited TCA to testify on mental health workforce shortage areas. It was a dynamic hearing. My [testimony](#) included highlights of the great work done by both professional school counselors and college counselors to address mental health issues in our schools, colleges and universities as well as the challenges the lack of payment parity for LPCs has on access to care.

This Week Ahead (as of 3/10/17)

Committee Meetings

- Monday, March 13, 2017
 - [House Human Services Committee](#), 8:30 am, E2.030 to hear four bills, including HB 1420 (Martinez, A) to impose late penalties on Medicaid managed care organizations that fail to timely pay certain physicians and other provider claims.
- Tuesday, March 14, 2017
 - [House Public Health Committee](#), 8 am, E2.012 to hear six bills, including HB 1600 (Thompson, S) relating to certain mental health screenings under the Texas Health Steps program.
 - [House Public Education Committee](#), Noon or upon adjournment of the House, E2.036 to hear 20 bills, including HB 729 (Bohac, D) to, among other changes, add gratitude to the list of positive character traits to be taught in public schools. Additional public testimony will also be taken on HB 21 (public school finance).

TCA's Watch List: Hundreds of bills were filed this week as legislators rushed to meet the 6 pm on March 10th deadline to file legislation. The TCA [Weekly Tracking Report](#) has therefore grown considerably. Key legislation that will impact professional counselors are listed below. To read the entire bill go to www.capitol.state.tx.us and enter the bill number:

- **HB 2898** (Gonzales, L) and **SB 311** (Hinojosa) (TSBEPC SUNSET BILL) relating to the creation of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council and to the continuation and transfer of the regulation of sex offender

treatment providers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, professional counselors, chemical dependency counselors, and social workers to the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council; providing civil and administrative penalties; authorizing a fee.

- **HB 3143** (Turner) relating to mental health professional staffing requirements at certain public institutions of higher education.
- **HB 3317** (Moody) relating to the provision of counseling services by certain providers under Medicaid and reimbursement for those services to add reimbursement for LPC-Interns and create parity for LPCs and others.
- **HB 2818** (Romero) and SB 1254 (Taylor, V) relating to the practice of and the billing codes used by certain mental health professionals (LPCs, LMFTs, and LCDCs).
- **SB 1428** (Taylor, V) relating to the provision of mental health telemedicine medical services
- **HB 11** (Price) relating to consideration of the mental health of public school students in school planning, educator training requirements, curriculum requirements, education programs, state and regional programs and services and health care.
- **HB 2775** (Phelan) relating to requirements for education preparation program support for certain candidates for certification to limit the number of and format of formal observations.
- **HB 2801** (Price) relating to contracts between Medicaid managed care organizations and certain providers of behavioral health and physical health services.
- **HB 2895** (Price) relating to the requirement that certain public institutions of higher education post mental health resources on the institutions Internet website.
- **HB 2897** (Price) relating to the mental health first aid program training and reporting.
- **HCR 84** (Swanson) proposing a constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for legislative review or approval of state agency rules.
- **SB 1688** (Lucio) relating to the establishment of the student mental health division with TEA.
- **SB 1689** (Lucio) relating to confidential mental health screenings for students in primary and secondary schools.
- **SB 1691** (Lucio) relating to the commissioner of education establishing an annual conference on methods to improve the mental health of students in public schools.
- **SB 1694** (Lucio) relating to suicide prevention training for certain mental health professionals.
- **SB 1699** (Lucio) relating to a model framework to address certain barriers to student learning.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

- IDENTIFY [who represents you](#) and load their contact information into your phone or computer.
- ACT on every alert that you receive. A call is better than an email; a visit is better than a call.
- SHARE the Weekly Update and Call to Action Alerts across your networks. Please acknowledge TCA as your source when you share.
- REVIEW bills that interest you and let jan@txca.org know what you think about them. Set up a personal tracking system at www.capitol.state.tx.us.
- WATCH the TCA Advocacy Video on the [TCA YouTube Channel](#) to hone your advocacy skills.
- ATTEND at least one TCA Advocacy Day. Register at www.txca.org/advocacydays. Bring a friend. TCA membership is encouraged but not required.

Thank you for all you do to support professional counselors, your students and your clients.

Contact jan@txca.org with questions or requests for additional information.

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