

TEXAS COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
85th Legislative Session - June 2, 2017
Weekly Legislative Update

ENCOURAGE THE GOVERNOR TO CONVENE A SPECIAL SESSION!
YOUR CALLS WORK!

CALL TO ACTION

All TCA Members – regardless of specialty – need to contact Governor Greg Abbott TODAY at <https://www.gov.texas.gov/contact/> or 512-463-2000. Phone calls will be more effective. Time is of the essence. Be very polite.

Message: *Speak from your heart. Personalize these points. How will sunset impact you, your students, your clients, the public?*

- Please reconvene a special session to extend the sunset date for the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors and the other mental health and medical boards.
- Continuation of the boards that regulate more than 55,500 mental health professionals and 70,000 physicians is essential to protect the public and ensure access to quality services.
- Comparisons to the sunset of the dental board years ago are dangerous and inaccurate. Parsing regulation of 13,000 dentists is not comparable to parsing regulation of over 100,000 health care providers.
- The associations representing Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists and Licensed Social Workers supported the recommendations of the Sunset Commission and worked hard to support efforts to pass their sunset legislation.
- The support of the mental health associations for their sunset legislation stands in stark contrast to the Dental Association which opposed their sunset legislation and worked hard to kill it.
- A special session focused just on the reauthorization of these essential boards could be completed very quickly and would be much less expensive than parsing their functions across other agencies that will be ill-prepared to take on those regulator duties.

Legislative Wrap-Up

Tempers were flaring as the regular session of the 85th Legislature gaveled to a close on Monday. Lots of finger pointing between the House and Senate leadership as the sunset legislation for all mental health boards as well as the medical board got caught in the fight to pass tax reform and bathroom bills.

TCA, nonetheless, had a very successful session fixing bills, passing bills and engaging with legislators on both sides of the aisles to promote the amazing work of professional counselors in all settings. June 18th is the deadline for the Governor to either sign, veto

or “pocket pass” legislation. Hopefully, our priority bills will make it through this next gauntlet.

Almost 250 professional counselors came to Austin during our three Advocacy Days and hundreds more participated virtually to work on and help pass the following bills:

- **SB 490** (Lucio/Huberty) has been sent to the Governor. It was amended to add language amending the Education Code regarding postsecondary counseling for certain students. It still requires inclusion of school counselor numbers of campus' Texas Academic Performance Reports.
- **SB 196** (Garcia/Coleman) has been sent to the Governor. It was amended to exempt school districts with less than 10,000 students. It still requires other campuses to post a notice on their website if they do not have a full-time school counselor, nurse or librarian.
- **HB 3083** (Price/Hinojosa) to make improvements to the mental health professional education loan repayment program, including reallocation of unused funds across professionals and directing the Coordinating Board to seek additional federal funding to expand the program.
- **HB 2818** (Romero/Taylor, Van) to codify the Texas Supreme Court ruling on the ability of LMFTs to diagnose for billing purposes.
- **HB 3808** (Clardy/Menendez) to add LMFTs to the mental health profession education loan repayment program. It was amended to include the definition of “psychology” which was SB 2001 that did not pass.
- **HB 2895** (Price/Seliger) to require institutions of higher education to post mental health resources on their websites.
- **HB 2466** (Davis/Huffman) relating to coverage for certain services related to maternal depression under the Medicaid and child health plan programs.
- **HCR 81** (Clardy/Taylor, Van) to recognize mental health professionals for their contributions to the state on the occasion of National Mental Health Month.
- **SB 179** (Menendez/Minjarez) relating to bullying and cyberbullying. TCA worked hard to amend this bill to remove the assignment of inappropriate duties to school counselors.
- **SB 462** (Seliger/Huberty) to extend to 2019 the pilot program authorizing the use of individual graduation committees.
- **SB 2039** (Zaffirini/Thompson) to develop a program and training for public schools on the prevention of sexual abuse and sex trafficking.

This week's [Legislative Tracking Report](#) includes the last 3 actions on the bills listed. Several bills were amended to allow other bills to “hitch rides” as the session ended. Go to www.capitol.state.tx.us to read complete bill texts.

Contact TCA Executive Director, [Jan Friese](#), with questions.

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

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