

TEXAS COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
85th Legislative Session – March 31, 2017
WEEKLY UPDATE

CALL TO ACTION

Legislation is beginning to move very quickly. Please carefully review the **What's Ahead** section of this report as it indicates when and on what bills TCA will testify or submit cards. Please call sponsors and committee members on those bills that are important to you and the counseling profession. To read the full text of each bill, go to www.capitol.state.tx.us.

What Happened This Week:

- **SB 490** (Lucio) passed the Senate on Thursday on a 29/2 vote and is headed to the House. SB 490 would require TEA to include data that is already being submitted to TEA on the number of school counselors on Texas Academic Performance Reports.
- **HB 1818** (Gonzales) to reauthorize the Texas Railroad Commission passed the House without the Schaefer and Tinderhold amendments and is headed to the Senate.
- **SB 3** (Taylor) to allow the allocation of public dollars to establish education savings accounts passed the Senate as substituted on an 18/13 vote and is headed to the House.
- **SB 1** (Nelson) which is the Senate version of the Appropriations bill passed the Senate and is headed to the House.
- **HB 1600** (Thompson) relating to certain mental health screenings under the Texas Health Steps program was favorably reported from the House Public Health Committee and is headed to the Calendars Committee.
- **HB 2335** (Miller) requiring training in trauma-based care for certain child-care, CPS and foster care workers was favorably reported as substituted from the House Human Services Committee and is headed to the Calendars Committee.
- **HB 1486** (Price) relating to certification standards for peer specialists was reported as substituted from the House Public Health Committee and is headed to the Calendars Committee.
- **SB 813** (Hughes) relating to recovery of damages, attorney fees and costs related to frivolous actions by state agencies was favorably reported from Senate State Affairs Committee
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What's Ahead: *(as of March 31, 2017)*

Monday, April 3, 2017

- [House Human Services Committee](#), 8 am, E2.030 to hear 5 bills including:
 - **HB 634** (Gonzalez) to direct CPS to give priority hiring for CPS workers to bachelor and graduate level social workers.
 - TCA will testify on this bill and request an amendment to add those who hold advanced counseling degrees.

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

- [House Public Education Committee](#), 8 am, E2.036 to hear 17 bills including:
 - **HB 743** (Farrar) to amend Chapter 33 of the Education to define "School Social Work"
 - TCA will testify on this bill to acknowledge that social workers play an important role in System Support; that Section 21.003(b) already permits the hiring of social workers by schools; that the Occupations Code regulates social workers and allows that licensing board to establish specialties such as "school social work;" that to place social work definitions in two separate statues will cause regulatory confusion; that the bill does not differentiate between bachelor and master's level social workers.
 - **HB 2623** (Allen) to require school districts to assist students in making the transition back to school after prolonged placements outside of school, including the provision of counseling services.
 - TCA will sign a card in support of HB 2623.
- [House Public Health Committee](#), 8 am, E2.012 to hear 15 bills, including several bills to address post-partum depression and:

- [HB 11](#) (Price) to consider the mental health of public school students in school planning, educator training requirements, curriculum requirements, educational programs, state and regional programs and services, and health care.
 - TCA will testify on the committee substitute to request that training on the effectiveness of school counseling programs be added to the mandated principal training and to point out that the adding a list of non-behavioral mental health professionals eligible to work in schools is redundant and unnecessary since the Education Code is Section 21.003(b) already permits a school district to hire those professionals.
- [Senate Business and Commerce Committee](#), 8 am, E1.016 to hear 19 bills, including:
 - **SB 860** (Zaffirini) relating to access to and benefits for mental health conditions and substance use disorders.
 - TCA will sign a card in support of SB 860.
- [House Insurance Committee](#), 8 am, E2.016 to hear 24 bills including:
 - **HB 2760** (Bonnen, G) to require health benefit plan provider networks to, among other things, maintain updated provider network directories.
 - TCA will sign a card in support of HB 2760
- Texas House of Representatives, 10 am, includes on the calendar for consideration by the House HB 10 (Price), which is the companion to SB 860 (above).

TCA's Watch List

The TCA [Weekly Tracking Report](#) includes the latest action on each bill that TCA is tracking. To read complete bills go to www.capitol.state.tx.us and enter the bill number. Please note that as bills move through the process, sponsors often offer "committee substitutes." As this happens, bill numbers change from HB and SB to CSHB and CSSB. This is important to note to ensure you are reviewing the most recent version of a bill.

What Can You Do?

- CONTACT the House Public Education Committee, the House Public Health Committee, the Senate Business and Commerce Committee and House Insurance Committee to comment on the bills listed above.
- CONTACT your Senator and thank them for voting for SB 490. All Senators, except Senators Hall and Nichols voted, for SB 490.
- REGISTER at www.txca.org/advocacydays to attend the April 18 and/or May 16 Advocacy Days. Bring a friend. TCA membership is encouraged but not required.
- 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 and social media. 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.
- IDENTIFY [who represents you](#) and load their contact information into your phone or computer.
- WATCH the TCA Advocacy Video on the [TCA YouTube Channel](#) to hone your advocacy skills.

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.

Connect with us.

