

TEXAS COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
85th Legislative Session – April 14, 2017
WEEKLY UPDATE

Engage in Virtual Advocacy on Tuesday, April 18th

More than 100 professional counselors will be at the Capitol on Tuesday advocating for YOU. Support their efforts by **making calls** on Tuesday. Let your Representative and Senator know that you would be there but for the important work you are doing at home!

CALL TO ACTION

- **HB 4213** (Phillips) is set for a hearing in [House Insurance Committee](#) on Tuesday, April 18 at 8 a.m. **HB 4213** would allow insurance companies to exclude mental health benefits and mental health providers, including LPCs, from “catastrophic” health care plans. All TCA members, and especially constituents, are asked to call the members of the House Insurance Committee to **oppose HB 4213**.
- **HB 310** (Johnson) is set for a hearing in [House Public Education Committee](#) on Tuesday, April 18th at 2 p.m. **HB 310** would allow school districts to use compensatory education funding to support school counseling programs. All TCA members, and especially constituents, are asked to call the members of the House Public Education Committee to **support HB 310**.
- **SB 982** (Perry) is set for a hearing in [Senate Health and Human Services Committee](#) on Wednesday, April 19 at 8 a.m. **SB 982** would allow child welfare workers to interject their personal beliefs into the services they provide or refuse to provide without any adverse action by state agencies or regulatory boards. All TCA members, and especially constituents, are asked to call the members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to **oppose SB 982**.
- **HB 2899** (Simmons) is set for a hearing in [House State Affairs Committee](#) **HB 2899** would prohibit local governments from adopting any measure that protects any class of persons from discrimination and repeals any such existing measures. All TCA members, and especially constituents, are asked to call the members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to **oppose HB 2899**.
- **Call** sponsors and committee members on those bills listed in the [Weekly Tracking Report](#) or the What’s Ahead section that are important to you. [Read the full text of each bill](#) by entering the bill number in the Legislative Search section.

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. Pay close attention to House Bills that are being heard in the Senate and Senate bills being heard in the House. Odds of passage increase as bills move through both bodies.

What’s Ahead (as of April 14, 2017)

Monday, April 17, 2017

- [House Human Services Committee](#), 9 am, E2.030, to hear 19 bills including:
 - **HB 928** (White) relating to assisting certain children who are in foster care or who have been adopted in the process of applying to institutions of higher education, including new school counselor responsibilities.

- **HB 1160** (Davis) relating to a court order for medical or mental health care for a child in the conservatorship of the Dept. of Family and Protective Services.
- **SB 11** (Schwertner) relating to DFPS administration of services, including foster care, child protective and intervention services.
- **[House Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee](#)**, 2 pm, E2.026 to hear 28 bills including:
 - **HB 91** (White) relating to a review of occupational licensing requirements related to an applicant's criminal history, authorizing licensing authorities to repeal this requirement following a review.

Tuesday, April 17, 2017 – TCA Advocacy Day

- **[House Insurance Committee](#)**, 8 am, E2.016, to hear 13 bills including:
 - **HB 4213** (Phillips) relating to the authorization of “catastrophic” health care plans that do not contain state-mandated health benefits. It would exempt these plans from offering coverage for mental health services by mental health providers including LPCs. **TCA will testify against HB 4213.** (See **Call to Action**)
- **[House Public Health Committee](#)**, 8 am, E2.012, to hear 16 bills, including:
 - **HB 3083** (Price) relating to eligibility requirements for the repayment of certain mental health professional education loans by adding Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors as eligible recipients.
 - **HB 118** (Munoz) relating to the processing and payment of claims for reimbursement by certain providers under the Medicaid program by allowing electronic claim filing and reducing the time for payment from 30 to 15 days. **TCA will sign a card in support.**
 - **HB 1616** (Thompson) relating to an exemption from civil liability for certain professionals for the disclosure of certain mental health information.
- **[House Public Education](#)**, 2 pm, E2.036, to hear 20 bills, including:
 - **HB 310** (Johnson) relating to the use of compensatory education allotment for a school district's guidance and counseling program. **TCA will testify in support.** (See **Call to Action.**)
 - **HB 3706** (Lucio, III) relating to certain alternative education programs designed to address workforce development needs of at risk students.
 - **HB 3887** (Coleman) relation to trauma training for public school personnel, including school counselors.
 - **HB 306** (Minjarez) relating to student harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, injury to or death of minor, including amending TEC Chapter 33.06 to add a new school counselor duty to “serve as an impartial mediator for interpersonal conflicts involving two or more students, including accusations of bullying or cyberbullying under Section 37.0832.” **TCA has concerns about the role of school counselors and the criminal penalties in this bill.**

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

- **HB 21** (Huberty) relating to public school finance and **HB 1486** (Price) relating to peer specialists are set on the House Calendar.
- **[Senate Health and Human Services Committee](#)**, 8 am, Senate Chamber, to hear 14 bills including:
 - **SB 982** (Perry) relating to protection of the rights of conscience for child welfare services providers, prohibiting any adverse actions if these providers refuse certain services,

including counseling, to their clients based on their personal religious beliefs. **TCA will testify against SB 982.** (See **Call to Action.**)

- **SB 1021** (Nelson) relating to a report on the consolidation of the health and human services system, including advisory committees within the system and the recreation of the Texas system of care framework.
- [House State Affairs Committee](#), 10:30 or upon adjournment, to hear 11 bills, including:
 - **HB 2899** (Simmons) to prohibit cities, counties and other local governmental entities from adopting measures to protect a class or persons from discrimination and repealing any such measures that are currently in place. **TCA will submit a card against HB 2899.**

What Happened This Week

TCA was very busy this last week. Agendas for committee meetings are getting longer. Both the House and Senate closed for the Good Friday holiday. The House will reconvene on Monday at 10; the Senate on Tuesday at noon. Here are a few of the highlights from last week:

- **HB 1600** (Thompson) relating to mental health screenings is set on the House Calendar.
- **HB 2898** (Gonzales) which is the mental health licensing boards' Sunset bill, was left pending in House Public Health after a long hearing. The Texas Psychological Association is working hard to retain an independent board and provided dozens of witnesses who in the process were somewhat disparaging of other mental health professionals. TCA, NASW-TX and TAMFT are working together on the Committee Substitute for **HB 2898** and to ensure its passage with **all** mental health boards organized under the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council. [Watch the hearing](#). TCA testified at 1:58:35.
- **SB 196** (Garcia) which would require each school to post notice on their website if they do not have a full-time school counselor, nurse, or librarian, was left pending in Senate Education. [Watch the hearing](#). TCA testified at 4:00.
- **HB 2313** (West) was reported from Senate Education Committee and sent to the Senate Local and Consent Calendar. Senator West has committed to amending his bill to include the TCA proposed language and remove the requirement that school counselors note on a student's transcript every time that student receives postsecondary advising. If you are a **constituent of Senator West**, please call him and thank him for working with us on the amendment to this bill. Remind him that only registrars have access to transcripts and the bill must be amended.
- **HB 11** (Price) was reported as substituted from House Public Health. The CSHC 11 does not include TCA's requested revisions. Chairman Price has agreed to add amendments on the House floor to include "effectiveness on school counseling programs" to the list of continuing education for principals. TASB, TASA, TESP and TASSP all agreed to that amendment. TCA also requested that school counselors be added to the list of educators eligible to serve on School Health Advisory Committees and that the bill reference the list of non-physician mental health providers listed in the Health and Safety Code rather than create another list in the Education Code. If you are a **constituent of Chairman Price**, please call him and thank him for working with us on the amendments to this bill.
- **HB 743** (Farrar) to amend Chapter 33 of the Education Code to define "social work" was favorably reported from House Public Education Committee. The bill does not have a Senate companion.
- **CSHB 10** (Price) relating to access to and benefits for mental health conditions and substance use disorders was referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Its companion **CSSB 860** (Zaffarini) was recommended for the Senate Local and Uncontested Calendar.
- **HB 2895** (Price) relating to the requirement that institutions of higher education post mental health resources on their websites was voted favorably from House Public Health Committee.

- **SB 1854** (Uresti) relating to a review of public school district paperwork requirements was left pending in Senate Education. Senator Uresti has agreed to work with TCA on an amendment to include paperwork required of school counselors in the review.
- **SB 2001** (Watson) relating to the definition of psychology was reported as substituted from the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

What Can You Do?

- IDENTIFY [who represents you](#) and load their contact information into your phone or computer.
- [REGISTER to attend](#) the May 16 Advocacy Day. 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.
- PROMOTE TCA as the voice of professional counselors in Texas to your colleagues.
- REVIEW bills that interest you and [email Jan Friese](#), TCA Executive Director, and let her know what you think about them. [Set up a personal tracking system](#).
- 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 Friese](#), TCA Executive Director, with questions or requests for additional information.

Connect with us:



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