



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager

From: Carrie Rogers, Government Relations Officer

Date: June 30, 2026

Subject: **Austin Government Relations Update – June 2026**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Mayor and City Council with a legislative and grants update from Austin Government Relations (AGR).

Legislative Division Highlights – State

House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee Hearing on June 24

City staff participated in a House Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) [hearing on Wednesday, June 24](#), to consider two interim charges related to the City's work on mental health, public safety, and homelessness. In the months leading up to the hearing, AGR met regularly with legislators, City departments, community partners, and Committee staff to coordinate messaging and materials for legislators and testimony at the hearing. Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis and Homeless Strategies and Operations David Gray in person. In addition, letters from Mayor Watson on each interim charge were also provided to Committee members.

Of note, many of the themes emphasized by the City and partners were echoed in the testimony of the other invited witnesses from across the State, including (1) the critical need for beds, (2) service options for individuals with severe mental health needs who are experiencing homelessness and (3) close the gaps between service points and increase coordination between providers serving this population – all priorities identified in the City's No Wrong Door program, a cross-departmental, inter-agency partnership focused on connecting the ecosystem's highest utilizers to services and care. A one-pager reflecting a partnership across Austin-Travis County is enclosed.

A Senate Health and Human Services Committee is [scheduled for Tuesday, July 7](#), on a similar charge. The City is not expected to testify in person but will attend and provide written testimony on behalf of Mayor Watson and Chief Davis.

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Preventing Homelessness of Foster Youth

The second charge focused on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative, which provides three years of federally funded rental assistance to former foster youth at risk of homelessness and to youth who have become homeless. Austin Government Relations, as well as Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations, supported LifeWorks and Dr. Liz Schoenfeld, Executive Director, who was invited to testify before the Committee, along with other working group partners. Schoenfeld cited the unfunded mandate on direct service providers to continue transition support services that lose state funding when youth age out of the foster care system at age 21. Schoenfeld's recommendations were to fund and extend supportive services for FYI-eligible youth through age 24 and to strengthen pre-exit transition planning.

There are several hearings coming up over the next few months, including charges relating to wildfire mitigation, permitting, and municipal fees. AGR will provide information relating to the hearings in future updates.

Legislative Division Highlights – Federal

Support Letter for H.R. 1267 – Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act

AGR coordinated with the City's Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) Working Group to develop and submit a support letter for [H.R. 1267](#), the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act. The bill would provide clear liability protections for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities that receive PFAS passively through contaminated source waters, waste streams, or federally required firefighting materials. The bill reinforces the longstanding "polluter pays" principle under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) by preventing PFAS manufacturers and other responsible parties from shifting cleanup costs onto local governments and utility ratepayers. The letter emphasizes the financial risk CERCLA litigation poses to Austin's water and wastewater systems, as well as the potential affordability impacts for vulnerable customers. The letter urges Congress to support and cosponsor the bill to ensure community ratepayers are not burdened with cleanup liabilities for chemicals they did not create or profit from.

Support Letter for H.R. 8870 – *BUILD America 250 Act*

AGR distributed a letter from Mayor Watson expressing the City of Austin's strong support for [H.R. 8870](#), the BUILD America 250 Act, which would reauthorize federal surface transportation programs as Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) approaches expiration. The letter emphasizes the importance of stable, predictable federal transportation funding and highlights provisions beneficial to local governments, including proposed increases to the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). It also reiterates Austin's long-standing request to be suballocated directly to metropolitan and local governments – who own and operate most transportation infrastructure. The correspondence additionally underscores the City's reliance on competitive federal programs such as Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A), Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)/Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE), Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), and the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Program (PROTECT), and supports strengthened investment in off-system, locally owned bridges. Importantly, the letter also conveys City Council's concerns related to autonomous vehicles (AV)

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deployment and safety, ensuring these issues remain part of the broader federal reauthorization discussion. In his letter, Mayor Watson urges Congress to maintain IIJA-level commitments and advance a bipartisan reauthorization that reflects the needs of fast-growing cities like Austin.

21st Century ROAD to Housing Act Update

[H.R. 6644](#), the *21st Century ROAD to Housing Act*, passed both chambers of Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support following months of negotiations between congressional leaders. The bill reflects several long-standing government priorities, including streamlined access to disaster recovery funds, safeguards for community development funding, expanded flexibility in the Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and new tools to support affordable housing production. While the White House had previously signaled its intent to sign the legislation promptly, the President has since paused the scheduled bill-signing. If enacted, the bill would significantly expand housing supply and improve long-term affordability.

Temporary Protective Status (TPS) Update

On June 25, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6-3 ruling in [Mullin v. Doe](#) that allows the federal government to proceed with ending Temporary Protective Status (TPS) designations for Haiti and Syria. The Court held that federal law bars judicial review of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) decision to terminate a TPS designation, reversing lower court orders that had temporarily maintained protections for affected nationals while litigation continued. The ruling means determinations made by then-Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem to end TPS for both countries may now move forward. The decision could have future consequences for immigrants from other countries that received TPS because of wars, natural disasters or other extraordinary conditions.

Grants Division Highlights

Pre-Award (*Grant Acquisition*)

Bridge Investment Program (BIP)

Austin Transportation and Public Works is preparing a FY 2026 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) application seeking federal funding for the East 7th Street Bridge, a critical transportation connection between East Austin and downtown. The project would preserve the bridge's current functionality, extend its service life, and reduce the risk of future disruptions and costly repairs.

City Council Agenda

There will be ten grants on the Consent Agenda for the City Council Meeting on July 23, 2026. The items will request approval for the submission of applications and acceptance of awards for Austin Technology Services, Austin Police Department, Austin Planning, Austin Watershed Protection, and Austin Parks and Recreation.

Next Steps

Austin Government Relations will continue to regularly engage with state and federal delegations and funders, and in coordination with City departments and local partners, to advocate for the City's priorities.

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Should you have any questions, please contact Carrie Rogers, Government Relations Officer, at Carrie.Rogers@AustinTexas.gov, or Erike Dzangare, Deputy Government Relations Officer, at Erika.Dzangare@AustinTexas.gov.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Austin Government Relations

Appendix: **Appendix A** – State & Federal Rulemaking Comments Update
Attmt.: **Attachment A** – Comments on HUD’s HOME Investment Partnerships Program
Attachment B – Comments on HUD’s Equal Access Revisions
Attachment C – H.R. 1267 Support Letter - Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act
Attachment D – H.R. 8870 Support Letter - BUILD America 250 Act
Attachment E – No Wrong Door One-Pager
Attachment F – Lifeworks Informational Overview

Appendix A – State & Federal Rulemaking Comments Update

Notice Title & Agency Docket Number	Status	Summary of Comments/Agency Abstract
<u>HOME Investment Partnerships Program: Further Program Updates and Streamlining – Docket No. FR-6144-P-09</u>	Submitted June 1, 2026	The City of Austin <u>comments</u> acknowledges HUD’s intent to streamline the HOME program but expresses significant concerns that several proposed changes – particularly those weakening tenant protections, reducing inspections, and removing green-building incentives – could compromise housing stability and safety. The City urges HUD to retain key tenant protections, maintain appropriate inspection standards, and continue supporting resilient construction practices.
<u>Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs Revisions – Docket No. FR-6518-P-01</u>	Submitted June 25, 2026	The City of Austin <u>comments</u> oppose HUD’s proposed revisions, noting that replacing gender identity protections with a narrow definition of “sex,” along with new verification requirements for shelter placement, would create significant barriers to HUD-funded housing and emergency shelter. The comments emphasize that transgender and gender-expansive individuals already face disproportionate rates of homelessness, discrimination, and safety risks, and the proposed rule would worsen inequities, increase unsheltered homelessness, and conflict with local nondiscrimination ordinances. The City highlights anticipated administrative burdens for service providers and warns that verification mandates would impede access, undermine trust, and reduce the effectiveness of homelessness response systems. The City strongly recommends that HUD withdraw the rule and retain existing nondiscrimination protections to ensure consistent and accessible service delivery.
<u>Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility – Docket No. FAA-2026-4558; Notice No. 26-03</u>	Reviewing Due July 6, 2026	<i>This action would implement section 2209, of the FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016, by establishing a process for operators and proprietors of certain fixed site facilities to request and maintain an unmanned aircraft flight restriction. The proposal also establishes requirements for applicants to demonstrate the unmanned aircraft flight restriction is necessary for: aviation safety, protection of people and property on the ground, national security, or homeland security. Lastly, the proposal identifies the types of operations that are allowed in the unmanned aircraft flight restriction UAFR.</i>
<u>Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance – Docket No. OMB-2026-0034</u>	Reviewing Due July 13, 2026	<i>The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposes to revise the Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance to improve government-wide policies and requirements related to the management of grants, cooperative agreements, and other forms of assistance. OMB is proposing revisions that would improve transparency, accountability, and oversight for Federal awards across the Federal Government. This includes ensuring that American tax dollars are not wasted or misused, activities performed under Federal awards are consistent with law and policy, and recipients are held accountable when they fail to meet relevant standards. The revisions also aim to ensure that basic American principles of equality and equal opportunity are upheld throughout all stages of the award making process and that unlawful discrimination is no longer permitted. Proposed changes also include providing further clarification on the regulatory status of the OMB requirements and on the process for future updates to the government-wide requirements. Finally, OMB also proposes changes to reduce recipient burden. The listed Federal grant-making agencies propose conforming changes to their respective adopting regulations, or, in the case of some agencies and other entities, establishing new adopting regulations or policies. The proposed changes reflect the administration's commitment to transparency, accountability, and proper oversight for the Federal grantmaking process. The proposed regulations seek to ensure that American tax dollars are ultimately used to serve the needs of the American public.</i>



May 29, 2026

Regulations Division
Office of General Counsel
Department of Housing and Urban Development
2415 Eisenhower Ave.,
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: City of Austin Comments – HOME Investment Partnerships Program: Further Program Updates and Streamlining [Docket No. FR-6144-P-09]

Submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the City of Austin, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s [notice](#) titled "*HOME Investment Partnerships Program: Further Program Updates and Streamlining*."

The City of Austin values HUD's ongoing efforts to strengthen the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) and appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed modifications to tenant protections, subsidy structures, property standards, and project design flexibilities. These comments reflect coordinated input from relevant City departments and local housing partners.

General Comments

HUD's supplemental rule proposes revisions intended to reduce administrative burden and enhance flexibility. While the City of Austin supports efforts to modernize and streamline the HOME program, some of the proposed revisions – particularly those affecting tenant protections – require additional refinement to ensure that flexibility does not compromise housing stability, health, or safety. The City of Austin appreciates HUD's efforts to maintain clarity, predictability, and protections that support both housing stability and long-term project viability.

Specific Comments by Section

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
Section II: Corrective and Remedial Actions	Reduction of requirement for more frequent inspection in	Apply the requirement for a more frequent inspection schedule to properties with "dangerous" or "unsafe" and/or "imminent danger" conditions, consistent with terminology defined in widely adopted building and

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
p. 23196	the case of health and safety deficiencies.	property maintenance codes. This should include small-scale and scattered site manufactured rental housing, where reduced inspection frequency could pose heightened risks. Maintaining a higher inspection standard for such properties supports baseline habitability and protects occupants from clearly identified hazards.
Section II: Proposed Removal of Green Building Incentive p. 23197	Proposed removal of the HOME Final Rule's 24 CFR 92.250(c) permitting participating jurisdictions to exceed the maximum per-unit subsidy for a project that meets certain green building standards.	Even if HUD moves away from incentivizing green building standards in this way, it may be beneficial to introduce alternative mechanisms that encourage resilient, energy-efficient construction. Given escalating climate-related risks and rising insurance costs, continued support for resilient building practices helps ensure long-term affordability and reduces financial risks for both tenants and project owners.
Section II: Additional Provisions Proposed for Removal p. 23198	Removing tenant protections introduced in the 2025 Final Rule.	The tenant protections from the 2025 Final Rule described in this section on p. 23198 are reasonable and beneficial to keep in place. For example, providing written time frames for maintenance and repairs as soon as practicable, not charging for reasonable wear and tear, reasonable written prior notice before entering a unit, and allowing tenants to organize tenant associations are reasonable baseline expectations for receiving federal funding. These protections are consistent with best practices across federal housing programs and support HUD's broader goals of minimizing displacement and promoting stable, secure tenancy. The City recommends retaining these protections to ensure baseline tenant safety and housing stability.

Conclusion

The City of Austin appreciates HUD's commitment to strengthening the HOME program and respectfully requests that HUD consider the recommendations provided in this comment letter. A balanced approach that increases administrative flexibility while retaining tenant protections will best support goals of the HOME program. The City of Austin looks forward to continued collaboration with HUD to ensure the program remains effective and responsive to evolving community needs.

Date: May 29, 2026
Subject: City of Austin Comments – HOME Investment Partnerships Program: Further Program Updates and Streamlining [Docket No. FR-6144-P-09]

Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov or 512.923.7577.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.C. Broadnax', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

T.C. Broadnax
City Manager
City of Austin

cc: The Honorable Austin Mayor and City Council
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Austin Assistant City Manager
Deletta Dean, Austin Housing Director
Keith Mars, Austin Development Services Director
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer



June 25, 2026

Regulations Division
Office of General Counsel
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW, Room 10276
Washington, DC 20410-0500

**Re: City of Austin Comments – Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs Revisions
[Docket No. FR-6518-P-01]**

Submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the City of Austin, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s [notice](#) titled *"Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs Revisions."*

Austin is committed to fair housing, equitable access to shelter, and the safe delivery of HUD-funded services, and values HUD's longstanding efforts to ensure that federal programs uphold civil rights protections and remain responsive to the needs of Austinites.

We respectfully offer the following comments and recommendations, which align with our statutory obligations under the Fair Housing Act, local nondiscrimination ordinances, and federal program requirements, to support clear implementation and ensure service delivery for the diverse communities we serve.

General Comments

The City of Austin opposes HUD's changes to core fair housing protections and has several overarching concerns with this proposed rule. Replacing longstanding protections for transgender and gender-expansive individuals with a narrow definition of "sex," coupled with the introduction of verification requirements for shelter placement, will create additional and unnecessary barriers to HUD-funded housing and emergency shelter. LGBTQ+ individuals and families – who already experience disproportionate rates of housing instability and homelessness – would face heightened risks under the proposed changes.

Systemic discrimination, weak policy protections, and persistent social stigma continue to drive disproportionate rates of homelessness among transgender and gender-expansive individuals. The

proposed rule risks worsening these inequities by erecting new barriers to accessing safe and affirming shelter. Local data shows that while transgender individuals represent a small percentage of the homeless population, they face elevated rates of violence and negative health outcomes, making nondiscriminatory access to shelter especially critical.¹ Moreover, improved data collection over recent years shows a significant increase in the number of individuals identifying as transgender within the homelessness response system, highlighting the importance of maintaining accessible shelter options.

As a jurisdiction that administers HUD-funded housing and homelessness programs and is responsible for ensuring safe and lawful access to services, the City of Austin is concerned that several proposed changes will impose substantial administrative burdens and create barriers to shelter and housing for vulnerable community members. These burdens include the need to revise intake protocols, adjust training and compliance systems, and reconcile conflicts between federal requirements and local nondiscrimination ordinances.

Verification requirements related to “sex” would significantly impede shelter access. Many individuals experiencing homelessness lack current identification due to cost, document loss during displacement, or the requirement of a residential address. Any mandate – whether ID-based or more intrusive – to verify sex would disproportionately exclude individuals from services, slow intake, increase unsheltered homelessness, and conflict with Austin’s established shelter protocols designed to ensure safety, privacy, dignity, and rapid access to services.

These requirements would also create additional administrative and financial burdens for homeless service providers, many of whom already operate with limited staffing and funding. Increased bureaucracy would divert staff time away from connecting individuals to housing and services, while new operational costs would reduce the resources available for essential shelter operations and participant support.

Further, imposing new eligibility barriers would erode trust between providers and individuals experiencing homelessness. Trust is central to outreach efforts, shelter acceptance, and long-term housing stabilization. Additional barriers would discourage individuals from seeking shelter and could contribute to increases in encampments and extended periods of unsheltered homelessness. Increasing barriers to shelter access is expected to result in fewer individuals coming indoors, ultimately leaving more individuals on the streets and placing additional strain on public systems and community safety efforts.

Given these concerns – including the operational and public-health impacts of the proposed revisions – the City of Austin respectfully recommends that HUD withdraw the rule in its entirety. Maintaining a clear and nondiscriminatory framework is essential for jurisdictions to administer HUD-funded programs effectively and lawfully.

¹ Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), [State of the System](#), October, 2025.

Specific Comments by Section

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
I. Background (p. 22780)	Reviews the 2012 and 2016 Equal Access Rules and cites Executive Order 14168 directing HUD to rescind the 2016 rule.	The shift away from long-established Equal Access standards would disrupt program continuity and remove protections that Austin and its service providers rely on for safe, predictable, and lawful program administration. HUD should consider how removing established frameworks could harm community members who rely on consistent access to housing and shelter programs.
II. Proposed Rule (p. 22780-22781)	Replaces “gender” and “gender identity” with “sex,” authorizes verification of sex for placement, and adds a new enforcement provision (§5.106(e)) allowing penalties – including potential loss of federal funds – for conflicts with state or local laws.	The City serves as the Fair Housing enforcement agency for our community and operates as a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP). Given this role, the City notes the following impacts of the proposed rule: 1. Reduced Protections for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Individuals: - The rescission would allow HUD-funded providers more discretion to deny access to facilities or services based on gender identity. This could result in increased discrimination against transgender and gender-expansive individuals, making it more difficult for them to access safe and appropriate housing or shelter. 2. Enforcement Challenges: - Removing clear regulatory language regarding gender identity makes it more difficult for fair housing agencies and FHAP partners to enforce nondiscrimination requirements consistently. Without explicit protection, there may be ambiguity in how complaints are investigated and resolved, leading to inconsistent enforcement and fewer successful outcomes for impacted individuals. 3. Potential Ripple Effect: - Allowing greater discretion in this area could set a precedent and have a ripple effect. Increased flexibility here may lead to similar actions in other cases involving protected classes, potentially weakening the fundamental goal of equal access protections. Rescinding the 2016 Equal Access Rule’s gender identity protections would significantly weaken fair housing

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
		enforcement for transgender and gender-expansive individuals. It would likely lead to increased discrimination, greater housing instability, and pose challenges for fair housing agencies' ability to ensure equal access. The proposed rule would create inconsistencies in the application of fair housing protections and could have severe negative impacts on some of the most vulnerable populations served by HUD programs. These revisions may result in disparate impacts and inconsistent intake practices that will likely result in a chilling effect on those seeking access to assistance. In addition, the new enforcement provision at §5.106(e) creates significant operational risks. It could penalize jurisdictions for upholding their own civil-rights obligations and would generate conflicts between federal and local law that undermine effective program administration. The City recommends retaining clear nondiscrimination protections and establishing explicit limits on verification procedures to avoid deterring individuals, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals and families, from seeking assistance, while also removing or revising the enforcement authority and clarify that jurisdictions will not face penalties for complying with local civil rights obligations.
III. Justification for the Rule Change (pp. 22781-22782)	HUD states that the 2016 Rule exceeded statutory authority and raises concerns about privacy, safety, and religious liberty.	Given the significant civil-rights implications, a justification of this magnitude warrants more than the limited explanation provided. The rationale does not align with local experience or the extensive body of evidence showing the heightened vulnerability of transgender and gender-expansive individuals in housing and shelter settings. Removing current protections will create ambiguity for providers, undermine safe placement procedures, and place vulnerable residents at greater risk. Austin urges HUD to maintain policies that support lawful, consistent, and safety-centered service delivery. The City would note that, while the proposed rule's justification (and HUD's messaging) about the rulemaking focuses on access to homeless shelters, the proposed rule's scope is much broader than that. It would eliminate LGBTQ+ protections across a range of HUD programs, including Section 8 housing/other housing programs, fair housing

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
		enforcement and administration, mortgage programs, homelessness and domestic violence programs, and community development programs. With an in-depth study by the National Alliance to End Homelessness showing that gender-expansive individuals face broad and pervasive housing discrimination and experience housing insecurity at eight times the rate of the general population, this proposed rule appears almost purposefully designed to further increase housing insecurity for this vulnerable group. The study also found that one-third of transgender individuals experience homelessness in their lifetimes, LGBTQ+ youth make up 40% of the homeless youth population, and transgender individuals frequently report feeling unsafe in emergency shelters.² These realities point to a need for pathways to safe, decent, affordable housing that addresses inequities. Rather than addressing these inequities, the proposed rule would exacerbate them.
IV. Findings and Certifications (pp. 22782-22784)	HUD states that the rule will not impose significant burdens on state or local governments or preempts state law.	Austin anticipates substantial administrative impacts, including the need to revise local procedures, enhance staff training, and update data systems. HUD should reassess the rule's practical implications for jurisdictions and provide sufficient implementation support.

Conclusion

The City of Austin appreciates HUD's consideration of these comments. For these reasons, the City of Austin respectfully urges HUD to **withdraw the proposed rule**. The changes would introduce substantial administrative complexity and create new burdens to shelter and housing access for residents who already face heightened vulnerability. Austin remains committed to ensuring that HUD-funded programs remain accessible and consistent for all community members.

² National Alliance to End Homelessness, [Nationwide Survey Shows Widespread Discrimination Against Gender-Expansive People, Including in Emergency Shelters](#), May 18, 2026.

Date: June 25, 2026
Subject: City of Austin Comments – Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs Revisions
[Docket No. FR-6518-P-01]

Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov or 512.923.7577.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.C. Broadnax', written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

T.C. Broadnax
City Manager
City of Austin

cc: Austin Mayor and City Council
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Austin Assistant City Manager
Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Austin Assistant City Manager
Deletta Dean, Austin Housing Director
David Gray, Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations Director
Dr. Lindsey Wilson, Austin Equity & Inclusion Director
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer



City of Austin

Kirk Watson, Mayor

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2100, Fax (512) 978-2120
mayor.watson@austintexas.gov

June 29, 2026

Re: City of Austin Supports H.R. 1267 – Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act
SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA EMAIL

Dear Chair Collins and Ranking Member Wilson,

On behalf of the City of Austin, thank you for your continued work to support the health, safety, and financial stability of our community. We write to express our unwavering support for H.R. 1267, the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act, and urge you to cosponsor this important bipartisan legislation.

As you know, EPA has taken steps to list Perfluorooctanoic (PFOA), Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS), and other Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The City of Austin agrees that contaminated sites should be cleaned up and that polluters should be held responsible for the costs associated with that remediation.

Local governments and water utilities did not manufacture or profit from PFAS chemicals. We receive PFAS passively – through polluted source waters, wastewater discharges, solid waste streams, and federally required firefighting materials. Despite EPA’s stated intent to exercise “enforcement discretion,” this does not prevent polluters from filing CERCLA contribution lawsuits against passive receivers like water and wastewater utilities, municipal solid waste facilities, and airports.

These lawsuits directly contradict CERCLA’s core “polluter pays” principle. Even when utilities ultimately prevail, the legal costs alone can impose severe affordability challenges on our most vulnerable ratepayers. Allowing manufacturers of PFAS to shift their cleanup liability onto public systems would result in increased taxes and higher utility rates for households already facing financial strain.

H.R. 1267 provides targeted, reasonable liability protections for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems that played no role in creating or distributing PFAS. This clarity is essential to ensure that costs are borne by the industries responsible for introducing PFAS into commerce – not the communities forced to manage the downstream impacts.

The City of Austin strongly supports this legislation because it protects:

- Local taxpayers and utility ratepayers,
- Public water and wastewater systems that appropriately manage PFAS they receive,
- The financial stability of municipal budgets, and
- The continued affordability of essential services.

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to advance H.R. 1267 and to work with your colleagues to ensure its swift passage. This bill offers urgently needed safeguards for communities nationwide and upholds the long-standing polluter-pays framework that Congress established under CERCLA.



City of Austin

Kirk Watson, Mayor

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2100, Fax (512) 978-2120
mayor.watson@austintexas.gov

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and for your continued service to our community. Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at 512.923.7577 or carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov.

Sincerely,

Kirk Watson
Mayor of Austin

cc: Austin City Council
T.C. Broadnax, Austin City Manager
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Mike Rogers, Austin Assistant City Manager
Susana Carbajal, Austin Assistant City Manager
Shay Ralls Roalson, Austin Water Director
Richard Mendoza, Austin Transportation and Public Works Director
Ghizlane Badawi, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Chief Executive Officer
Jorge Morales, Austin Watershed Protection Director
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer



City of Austin

Kirk Watson, Mayor

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2100, Fax (512) 978-2120
mayor.watson@austintexas.gov

June 29, 2026

Re: City of Austin Supports H.R. 8870 – BUILD America 250 Act
SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA EMAIL

Dear Senator Cornyn:

As the Senate prepares to consider legislation to reauthorize federal surface transportation programs, I urge you to consider City of Austin and local government priorities that are critical to addressing local mobility, safety, and economic development. As Congress prepares for the expiration of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in 2026, this legislation provides an important foundation for maintaining continuity and stability in federal transportation programs.

In addition to my role as Mayor of the City of Austin, I serve as Vice Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) Transportation Committee. Local governments have collectively developed priorities (LOT Coalition Priorities), many of which are reflected in bipartisan House legislation (H.R. 7437), the BASICS Act introduced earlier this year. I am pleased that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved a reauthorization bill (H.R. 8870 – BUILD America 250 Act) that reflects some of the priorities developed by the LOT Coalition. As the House and Senate continue to work on surface transportation reauthorization, I hope you will be able to further address local priorities and modernize federal transportation programs to reflect local needs and how infrastructure investment actually works on the ground.

Some provisions of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee bill that we appreciate include the proposed funding increases for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and codification of the Bridge Formula Grant Program, with funds set aside for local bridges. However, I encourage Congress to further expand the share of these federal formula funds that are suballocated to metropolitan areas and local governments, who own and manage most of the transportation network and are closest to community safety and mobility needs.

We also value the continuation of competitive programs that cities rely upon, including Safe Streets for All (SS4A), BUILD, INFRA, and PROTECT. The codification of SS4A is a significant win for local governments and would help cities advance critical safety projects. Changes to the bridge program – requiring states to dedicate funding to off-system and locally owned bridges – are another important step towards insuring aging local infrastructure receives needed attention. The bill's new Surface Transportation Accelerator Grant (STAG) program, which dedicates funding for local and regional applicants, presents an additional opportunity for cities to pursue multimodal, congestion-relief, and resilience-focused projects that improve regional mobility.

As Congress continues to work on reauthorization, we urge you to maintain strong, predictable investment levels and avoid reductions from IIJA-era commitments. Stable and sustainable federal funding remains essential to enabling cities like Austin to plan responsibly, deliver major capital projects, and support safe, efficient, and resilient transportation networks for our growing communities.



City of Austin

Kirk Watson, Mayor

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2100, Fax (512) 978-2120
mayor.watson@austintexas.gov

We further encourage Congress to invest in AV readiness and system-wide safety research, particularly on standardized data sharing, congestion impacts, and resources for our first responders to safely interact with AVs in complex urban settings. At the broadest level, I encourage Congress to develop autonomous vehicle (AV) legislation that protects local government authority to manage public rights-of-way, set local traffic rules, enforce traffic laws, and manage curb space and parking. These are inherently local responsibilities that must reflect the conditions, needs, and priorities of local communities. In addition, AV legislation should minimize unfunded mandates, prioritize safety and accountability and preserve multimodalism and ensure that AVs are not prioritized over other roadway users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Thank you for your leadership and ongoing partnership on these critical infrastructure issues. We respectfully urge the Senate to move forward the Senate's efforts to advance surface transportation reauthorization that reflects the needs and priorities of America's cities.

Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at 512.923.7577 or carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov.

Sincerely,

Kirk Watson
Mayor of Austin

cc: Austin City Council
T.C. Broadnax, Austin City Manager
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Mike Rogers, Austin Assistant City Manager
Richard Mendoza, Austin Transportation and Public Works Director
Liane Conte, Austin Project Connect Interim Mobility Officer
Ghizlane Badawi, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Chief Executive Officer
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer

No Wrong Door

Coordinated Crisis Response Across Public Safety, Mental Health, & Homelessness

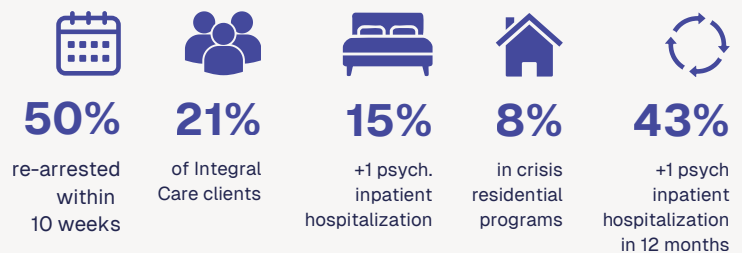
Unprecedented local need

Many people with complex social and behavioral health needs cycle through a fragmented emergency response system, across law enforcement, emergency medical care, the criminal justice system, emergency health systems, and community service providers.

High system utilizers (APD data 2021-'25)



Justice-involved clients (2023)



- **High system utilizers without sustained care** cost taxpayers \$137 million annually across Travis County hospitals, emergency departments, police services, and jail.
- **Integral Care's** psychiatric crisis stabilization beds cost \$776 per day on average, and the Extended Observation Unit up to \$2,283 per day.
- **Austin State Hospital's** daily average fee is \$917 for adult inpatient services.

Ongoing efforts & service gaps

Austin-Travis County is advancing its regional response through specialized interlocal initiatives, including deflection efforts addressing public safety, mental health, and homelessness. Although services are available across the community, **demand continues to increase** due to the number and complexity of cases, while minimal bed availability creates additional pressure.

Immediate crisis care for complex co-occurring cases remains one of the most acute gaps in the Austin-Travis County continuum of care. Long-term treatment options for significant and chronic substance use and mental health conditions are scarce, often leading to discharge to the street with only a short-term fix and no sustained care plan. Intermediate, step-down residential capacity is just as important for ongoing care.

Central Health, Travis County's hospital district, and Integral Care, the Local Mental Health Authority, are adding beds and expanding capacity, but **state support is crucial**.

No Wrong Door

Coordinated Crisis Response Across Public Safety, Mental Health, & Homelessness

System-wide needs

Available resources have not kept pace with accelerating demand for appropriate service capacity that is both accessible and available. People who most frequently use emergency response systems require **more personalized, ongoing behavioral health care** than the general population in need of mental health services. Meeting that need **requires specialized capacity** beyond conventional housing and homelessness services, and it is also where the crisis-care gap is most apparent.

- **Additional inpatient beds** for psychiatric, substance use disorder treatment, and extended observation.
- **A 24/7 dedicated, single-point, no-refusal receiving option** for law enforcement, first responders, and walk-in referrals.
- **Emergency detention holds are limited to police officers**, reducing resources for traditional law enforcement safety needs.

Legislative considerations

- Fund a mental health crisis center for complex co-occurring cases**
 Invest in a mental health care continuum that builds out a holistic crisis response through alternatives to incarceration, additional residential capacity to bridge the gap between acute crisis and independent living, and step-down services for all.
- Enact data sharing provision for efficient service coordination**
 Authorize reasonable information exchange between public agencies for people in recidivism to enable coordinated resource navigation for Individualized Service Plans.
- Remove exclusionary criteria for hospitals**
 Remove policies that deny or restrict care to people due to specific disabilities or a related condition.

EXPANDING TEXAS' UTILIZATION OF FOSTER YOUTH TO INDEPENDENCE (FYI) VOUCHERS

A small state investment in supportive services can leverage significant federal rental support for foster youth to prevent and resolve homelessness.

The Foster Care to Homelessness Pipeline

Across the country, youth aging out of foster care face extreme housing instability and far too often fall into homelessness. National research has found that nearly half of foster youth experienced homelessness at least once before they turned 26.¹ In Texas, one-third of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness before turning 21.²

HUD's Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program Is Helping Solve This Issue

The Melania Trump Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, launched during President Trump's first term, provides housing choice vouchers to young people ages 18–24 as they transition out of foster care into independence. FYI vouchers provide up to 36 months of rental support, helping young adults build stability and move toward self-sufficiency. Importantly, the First Lady has protected and increased the annual FYI appropriation in the Congressional Budget process.

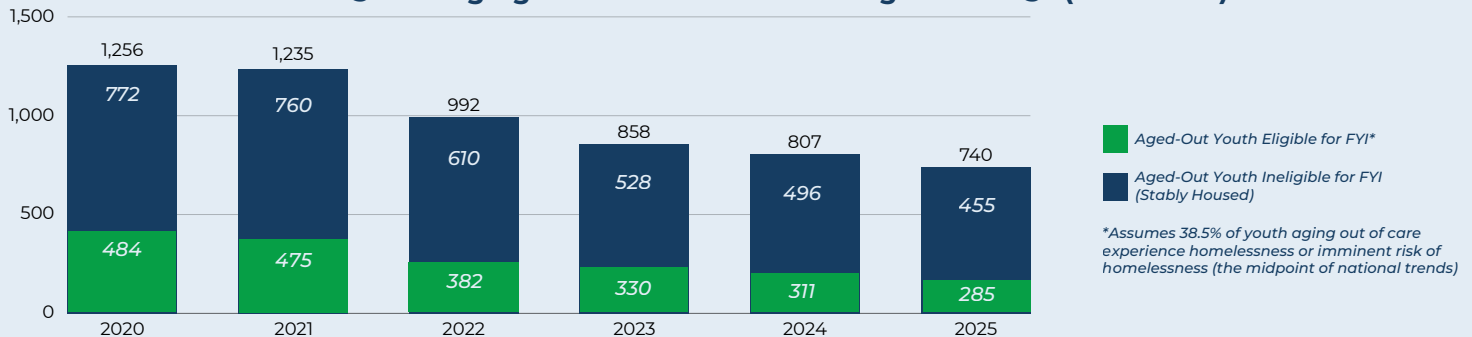
However, federal FYI regulations require child welfare agencies to pair each voucher with supportive services—without providing funding for those services. This unfunded mandate creates a significant barrier to fully utilizing the program and drawing enough vouchers to meet the need across the state. While Texas has successfully expanded its FYI implementation from roughly 40 to nearly 650 vouchers in just five years, dedicated funding for supportive services is essential to ensure no young person exits foster care to homelessness.

The Scope of the Need

Each year, more than 700 youth age out of foster care in Texas. Between 2020 and 2025, this number ranged from 740 to 1,256, for a total of 5,888 youth.³ Based on national trends, up to 46% of these youth will experience homelessness by the age of 26, with approximately 12% of youth transitioning out of care and directly into homelessness.⁴

Currently, there are 641 FYI vouchers allocated to Texas, but only 75% are currently in use. Accounting for the vouchers that are already utilized, an estimated 1,859 aged-out youth in Texas are eligible for an FYI voucher. Ensuring that aged-out youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability have access to supportive services until their 25th birthday would allow all eligible youth to access available FYI vouchers.

Number of Youth Aging Out of Care Who Are Eligible for FYI (Statewide)



¹ Dworsky, A., Napolitano, L., & Courtney, M. E. (2013). Homelessness during the transition from foster care to adulthood. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(52), S318–S323. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24148065/>

² Anne E. Casey Foundation & KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2020). Youth transitioning out of foster care: Experienced homelessness in the past two years. Retrieved from: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/10857-youth-transitioning-out-of-foster-care-experienced-homelessness-in-the-past-two-years#detailed/1/any/false/1698,1697/6259,6260,6261,6262/21107,21108>

³ Texas Department of Family & Protective Services. Agency Data Warehouse: Demographics of Children No Longer in DFPS Responsibility. Retrieved from: https://databook.dfps.texas.gov/views/cps_pp_20_dfps/monthlysummary

⁴ Tyrell, F. A., & Yates, T. M. (2017). A growth curve analysis of housing quality among transition-aged foster youth. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 46(1), 91117. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-016-9370-1>

How it Would Work

Supportive services would focus on:

- 1. **Housing navigation:** Apartment search, landlord engagement, application and inspection support.
- 2. **Case management:** Weekly check-ins (at minimum), lease compliance support, crisis resolution, service and resource coordination, financial planning, and stabilization during moves or transitions.
- 3. **Tenancy stabilization:** Eviction prevention, landlord mediation, and move-in support.
- 4. **Transition planning:** Savings and credit repair, and connection to community supports and resources.

Policy Requests

To ensure eligible youth can access this critical resource, the Texas Legislature should consider the following policy changes:

- Expanding access to supportive services for youth up to age 25 who are literally homeless, imminently at risk of homelessness, or assigned an FYI voucher, with the opportunity to extend services beyond their 25th birthday for youth with an assigned FYI voucher;
- Formally incorporating FYI vouchers into the Preparation for Adult Living curriculum to ensure that all youth preparing to age out of care are aware of this resource;
- Strengthening transition planning to formalize early planning and systematically identify housing resources for each exiting youth, and
- Investing in a statewide system to track demand for (and deployment and utilization of) FYI vouchers

Budget Request

The Texas Legislature should consider a budget request that includes \$9,712,500 in 2027-28 to support services for 925 youth, followed by \$16.65 million in 2028-29 to scale services to an additional 925 youth, to cover the supportive service requirement for the FYI program. This would serve 1,850 youth (the midpoint of the range for the estimated unmet need), enabling eligible youth to successfully access these vouchers and receive the resources necessary to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

	Youth Served	Amount/Youth	Total
Year 1	925	\$7,500 annual support services + \$3,000 one-time housing navigation expenses for youth enrolled in Year 1	\$9,712,500
Year 2	1850 (925 youth from Year 1 + 925 additional youth)	\$7,500 annual support services for youth enrolled in Years 1 & 2 + \$3,000 one-time housing navigation expenses for youth enrolled in Year 2	\$16,650,000

The Cost of Inaction

Youth aging out of foster care are at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness and housing instability in early adulthood which, in turn, increases the risk of adult chronic homelessness. The year-over-year cost of inaction is substantial, with annual per-capita spending for each unhoused individual totaling \$43,901.⁵ That is roughly \$30,000 more per person than the \$10,500 needed to ensure foster youth receive housing and supportive services to avoid homelessness.

A Targeted Investment with Immediate Impact

A relatively modest state investment in supportive services—paired with targeted policy changes to strengthen access, awareness, and coordination—would unlock the full potential of FYI vouchers. These efforts would ensure that young people leaving foster care can reliably access and sustain stable housing, while allowing Texas to make better use of federal dollars already available. By closing these gaps, the state can shift from responding to homelessness after the fact to preventing it at a critical moment of transition.

⁵ Dadpay, A., & Huang, P. (2024). The cost of homelessness in Dallas & Collin Counties. Dallas County Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: <https://www.dallascounty.org/Assets/uploads/docs/hhs/data-reports/The-Cost-of-Homelessness-in-Dallas-and-Collin-Cos.pdf>

Youth Aging Out of Foster Care by Region

	Statewide	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Region 11
2020	1256	69	59	259	81	27	251	151	236	27	12	84
2021	1235	74	64	251	62	33	222	177	215	43	15	79
2022	992	79	45	203	51	25	189	140	166	26	11	57
2023	858	62	55	173	49	30	161	111	126	18	18	55
2024	807	74	59	166	42	13	130	93	144	19	20	47
2025	740	51	40	169	36	17	118	81	143	12	17	56
Total	5888	409	322	1221	321	145	1071	753	1030	145	93	378

FYI Voucher Allocation by Region

FYI vouchers ^a	641 ^b	25	18	85	12	16	134	160	53	17	41	57
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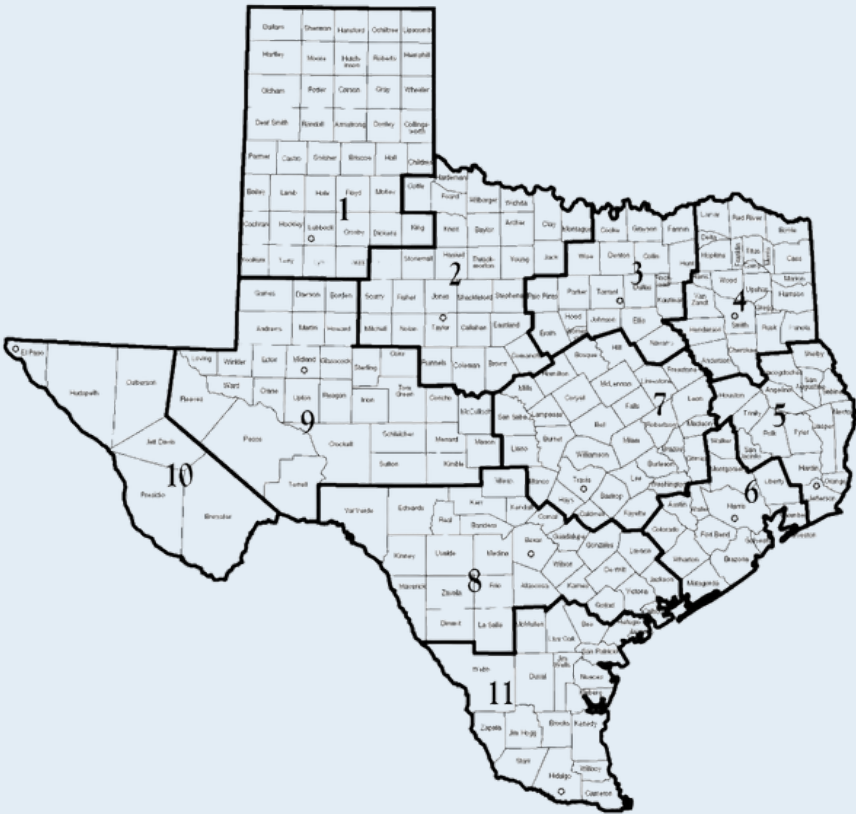
Currently, there are 641 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers allocated to Texas.

^aTotal effective FYI voucher awards, as of November 2025
^bIncludes an additional 23 FYI vouchers allocated to Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs

Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs – DFPS Region Affiliation

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- Vice Chair Erin Zwiener – Region 7
- Rep. Sheryl Cole – Region 7
- Rep. Philip Cortez – Region 8
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- Rep. Terri Leo Wilson – Region 6
- Rep. David Lowe – Region 3
- Rep. Shelley Luther – Regions 3, 4
- Rep. Jon E. Rosenthal – Region 6
- Rep. David Spiller – Regions 2, 3, 7
- Rep. Carl Tepper – Region 1

Region Map



DFPS Region	Counties Represented	IGA Committee Affiliation
Region 1	Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe, Carson, Castro, Childress, Cochran, Collingsworth, Crosby, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Dickens, Donley, Floyd, Garza, Gray, Hale, Hall, Hansford, Hartley, Hemphill, Hockley, Hutchinson, King, Lamb, Lipscomb, Lubbock, Lynn, Moore, Motley, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, Terry, Wheeler, Yoakum	Rep. Carl Tepper
Region 2	Archer, Baylor, Brown, Callahan, Clay, Coleman, Comanche, Cottle, Eastland, Fisher, Foard, Hardeman, Haskell, Jack, Jones, Kent, Knox, Mitchell, Montague, Nolan, Runnels, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger, Young	Rep. David Spiller
Region 3	Collin, Cooke, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Erath, Fannin, Grayson, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Navarro, Palo Pinto, Parker, Rockwall, Somervell, Tarrant, Wise	Rep. Cassandra Garcia Hernandez Rep. David Lowe Rep. Shelley Luther Rep. David Spiller
Region 4	Anderson, Bowie, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Delta, Franklin, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Hopkins, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Panola, Rains, Red River, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, Wood	Rep. Shelley Luther
Region 5	Angelina, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler	
Region 6	Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, Wharton	Chairman Cecil Bell Rep. Terri Leo Wilson Rep. Jon E. Rosenthal
Region 7	Bastrop, Bell, Blanco, Bosque, Brazos, Burleson, Burnet, Caldwell, Coryell, Falls, Fayette, Freestone, Grimes, Hamilton, Hays, Hill, Lampasas, Lee, Leon, Limestone, Llano, Madison, McLennan, Milam, Mills, Robertson, San Saba, Travis, Washington, Williamson	Vice Chair Erin Zwiener Rep. Sheryl Cole Rep. David Spiller
Region 8	Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Calhoun, Comal, DeWitt, Dimmit, Edwards, Frio, Gillespie, Goliad, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Jackson, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, Medina, Real, Uvalde, Val Verde, Victoria, Wilson, Zavala	Rep. Philip Cortez
Region 9	Andrews, Borden, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Dawson, Ector, Gaines, Glasscock, Howard, Irion, Kimble, Loving, Martin, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Midland, Pecos, Reagan, Reeves, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Terrell, Tom Green, Upton, Ward, Winkler	
Region 10	Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Presidio	
Region 11	Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Starr, Webb, Willacy, Zapata	

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