

March 21, 2023
House Education Committee
FOR HB 2729 (Harris) *maximizing preschool workforce*

Chairman Buckley and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2729, and thank you to Representative Harris for filing this important bill on behalf of the Texas Association of Business.

TAB is the State Chamber of Commerce and the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers. TAB represents members across every industry sector and size, and our local chamber partners across the state. TAB's purpose is to "champion the best business climate in the world, unleashing the power of free enterprise to enhance lives for generations".

Preschool access is a two-generation workforce issue: essential to support the workforce of today and imperative to develop the workforce of tomorrow. As part of priority package, TAB has language specifically supporting increased access to affordable high-quality childcare and before and after-school programming.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, a **lack of reliable child care, including preschool, has resulted in an estimated \$9.39 billion loss for the Texas economy.** The same study found that 74% of Texan parents reported missing work due to child care issues in the past month, evidence that a booming economy is dependent on the availability of care to meet the needs of hard working Texan families. ([U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2021](#)).

HB 2729 will remove a critical barrier to preschool access by removing an unnecessary obstacle to public schools opening their doors to children currently eligible to attend publicly funded PreK.

With HB 3 from the 86th Legislature, Texas took a huge step toward strengthening our economy by helping some Texans who did not have access to high quality early childhood education access to it. A large part of HB 3's plan for delivering

PreK education in Texas was Prekindergarten Partnership Programs which empower districts to serve more children with less costs to the districts by partnering with high-quality licensed preschool providers. However, it imposed a NEW licensing requirement that had never applied in the over two decades of PreK partnerships in Texas. With current teacher shortages, we support removing barriers, while still requiring the specific skills and training needed, to ensure schools can utilize Pre-K partnerships.



THE TEXAS STATE CHAMBER

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With record low unemployment levels, to keep the Texas economy growing it is imperative that we draw new or dormant workers back to the workforce. When parents have affordable and trusted options for their children, they will be able to re-enter the workforce and keep the Texas economy moving, this is an issue that we hear about often from our membership.

For these reasons, TAB strongly supports HB 2729 on behalf of the Business Community. We thank you Chairman Buckley, Chairman Harris, and the members of this committee for your leadership to make sure Texas remains the best place to do business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Mauro".

Megan Mauro
SVP, Policy & Advocacy
Texas Association of Business