

Legislative Update: Rooted in (Sur-)Reality

Jason Sabo
Frontera Strategy

2026 West Texas Rural Philanthropy Days
Alpine, Texas

July 30, 2026

Who is
this
joker?

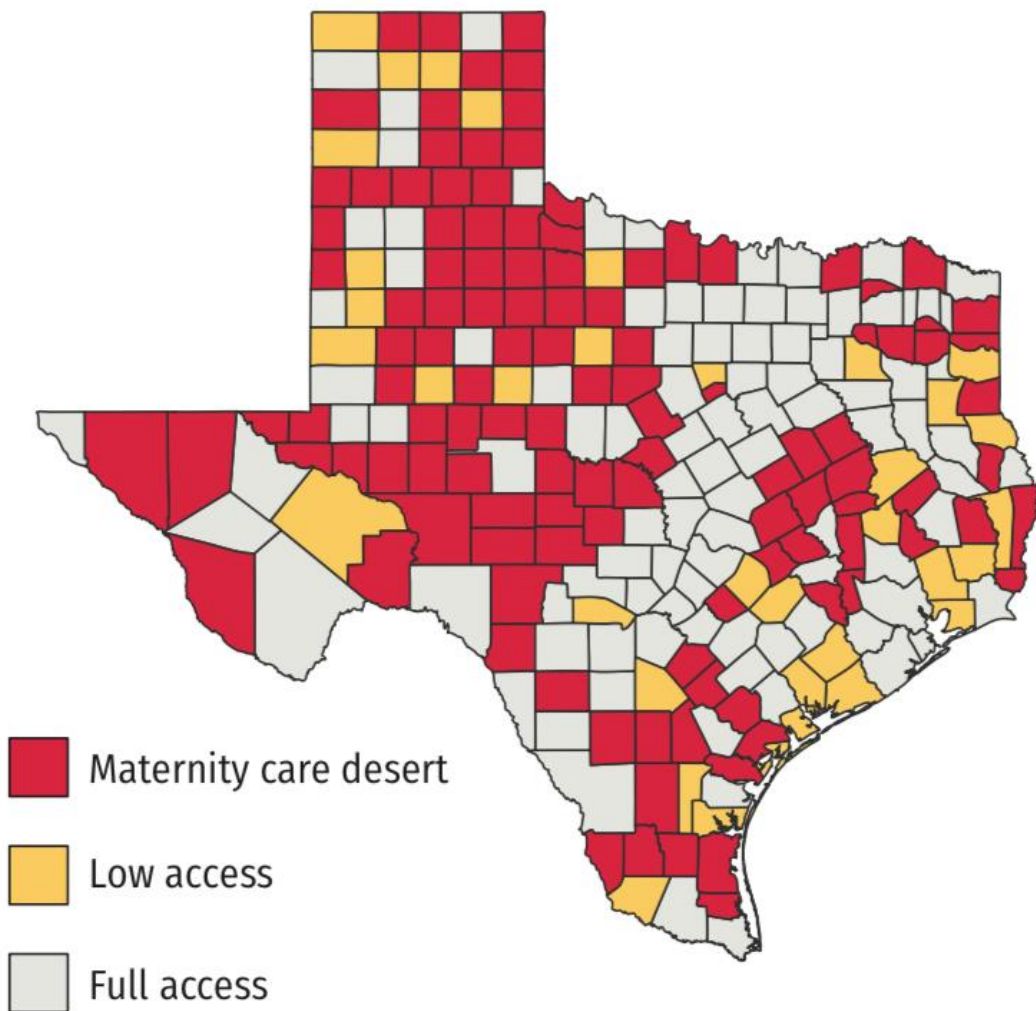


Overview

- West Texas and Public Opinion Context
- Timeline for Texas Politics 2026-2027
- Runway for the 2027 Texas Legislature
 - Ah, Texas Politics!
 - Interim Charges – Sneak Peak at Emerging Priorities
 - Texas Sunset Commission - HHS State Agency Reviews
 - Texas State Budget – Buckle up, buttercups!
- West Texas and the Texas Legislature

You CAN engage. Don't be a wallflower.

Access to maternity care in Texas

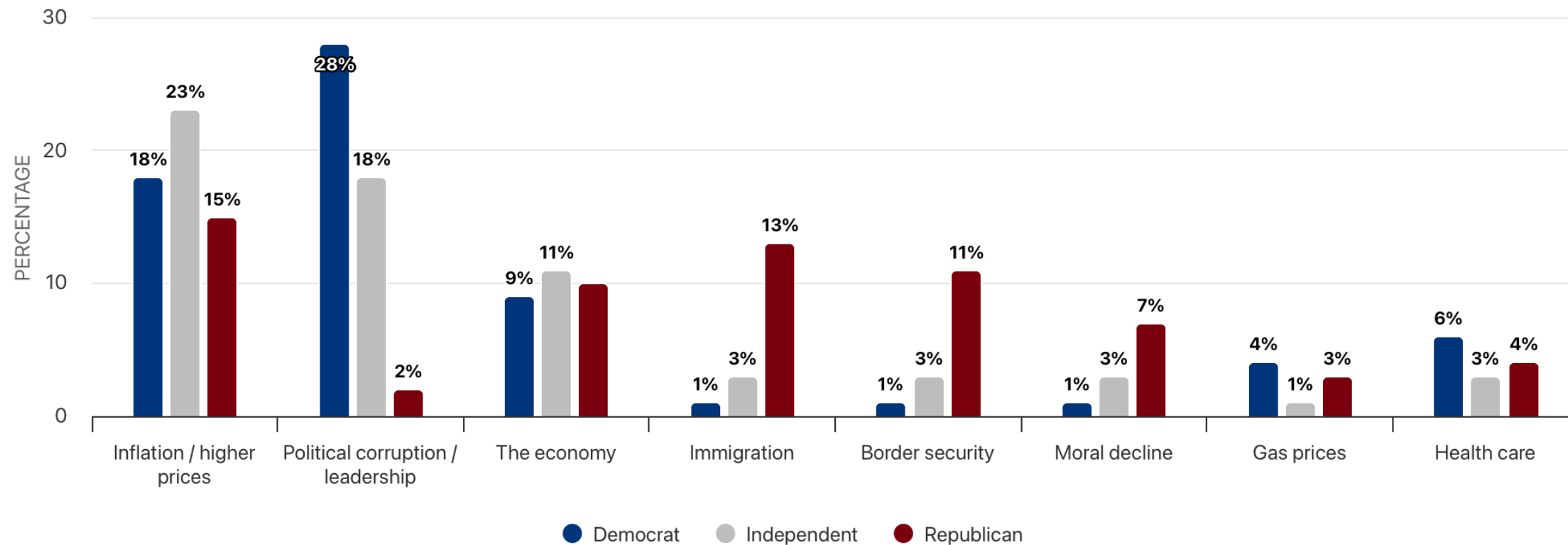


47%
of Texas counties
are defined as
maternity care
deserts.

Most Important Issue Facing Texas (June 2026)

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING TEXAS (JUNE 2026)

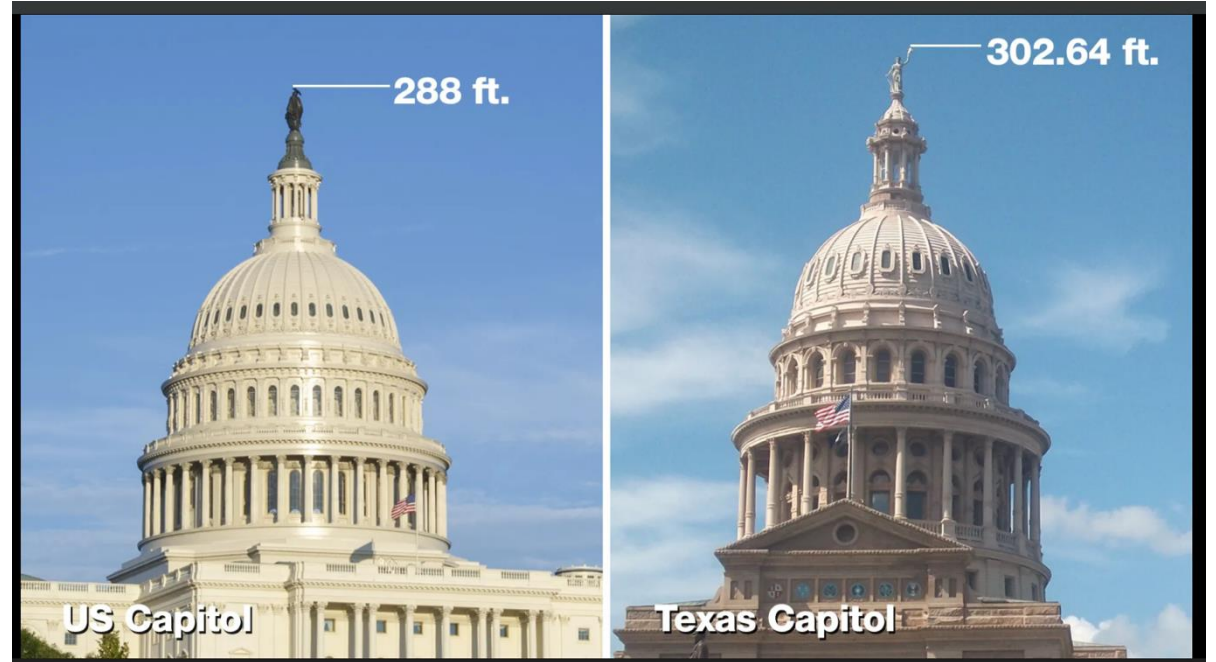
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June 2026 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

Texas Legislature Timeline: 2026-2027

- March - May 2026: Primary and Runoff Elections
- Spring/Summer 2026:
 - Interim Committee Hearings and Reports
 - Texas Sunset Commission state agency reviews
- November 3, 2026: General election
- November 9, 2026: Legislative pre-filing begins
- January 12, 2027: First day of 90th Regular Session
- May 31, 2027: Last day of 90th Regular Session
- Summer 2027: Special Session(s)?
- Fall 2027: Sunset of Texas Education Agency begins



Your Texas Legislature 2025

	Republican	Democrat
Texas House of Representatives	88	62
Texas Senate	20	11

2025 House Speaker Race Tells Story Bubbling Under Surface in 2027

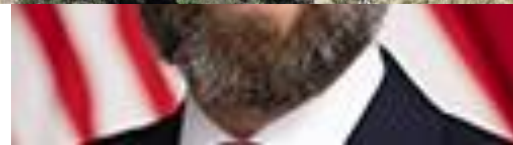
2025 Vote - Speaker of Texas House of Representatives

- Representative Dustin Burrows – 85 (36 R and 49 D)
- Representative David Cook – 55 (52 R and 3 D)
- Present Not Voting – 9 (9 D)
- Absent – 1 (1 D)

2027 Could See Further Challenges to Speaker

- Quorum Breaking Democrats Fined
- Division among House GOP Caucus
- Republican and Democratic Bases Mobilizing







THE JOE ROGAN EXPERIENCE

#2352

**JAMES
TALARICO**



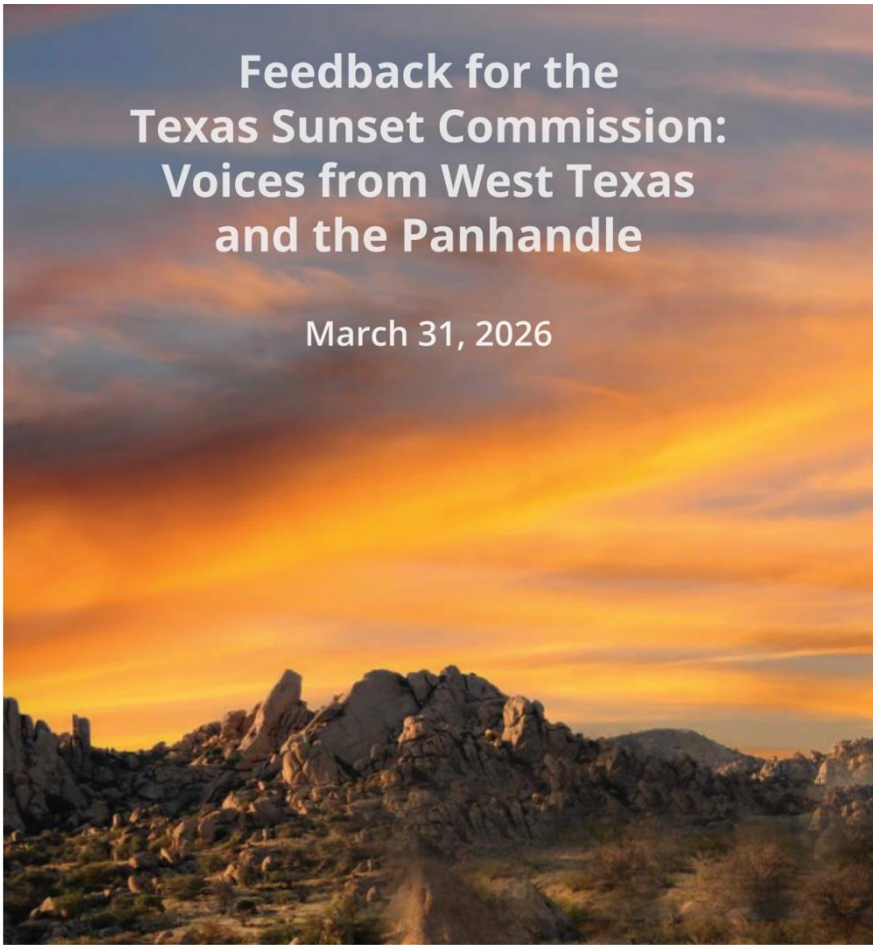
Texas Senate and House Interim Charges

- “To Do” Lists for Standing Committees
- Emerging Themes
 - Data Centers, Data Centers, Data Centers
 - Water (See: Centers, Data)
 - Transparency and Fraud
- Stuff You Just CANNOT Make Up

Texas-New Mexico Boundary: Study the constitutional, statutory, fiscal, and economic implications of adding to Texas one or more contiguous counties of New Mexico. Provide a detailed analysis of pertinent provisions of the United States Constitution, the Texas Constitution, the New Mexico Constitution, relevant federal and state statutes, and applicable judicial precedent. Identify and outline all procedural steps required at both the state and federal level necessary to admit territory currently part of New Mexico into Texas. Recommend drafts of any requisite legislation or resolutions to initiate the process.

Feedback for the Texas Sunset Commission: Voices from West Texas and the Panhandle

March 31, 2026



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The Philanthropy of George & Gladys Abell



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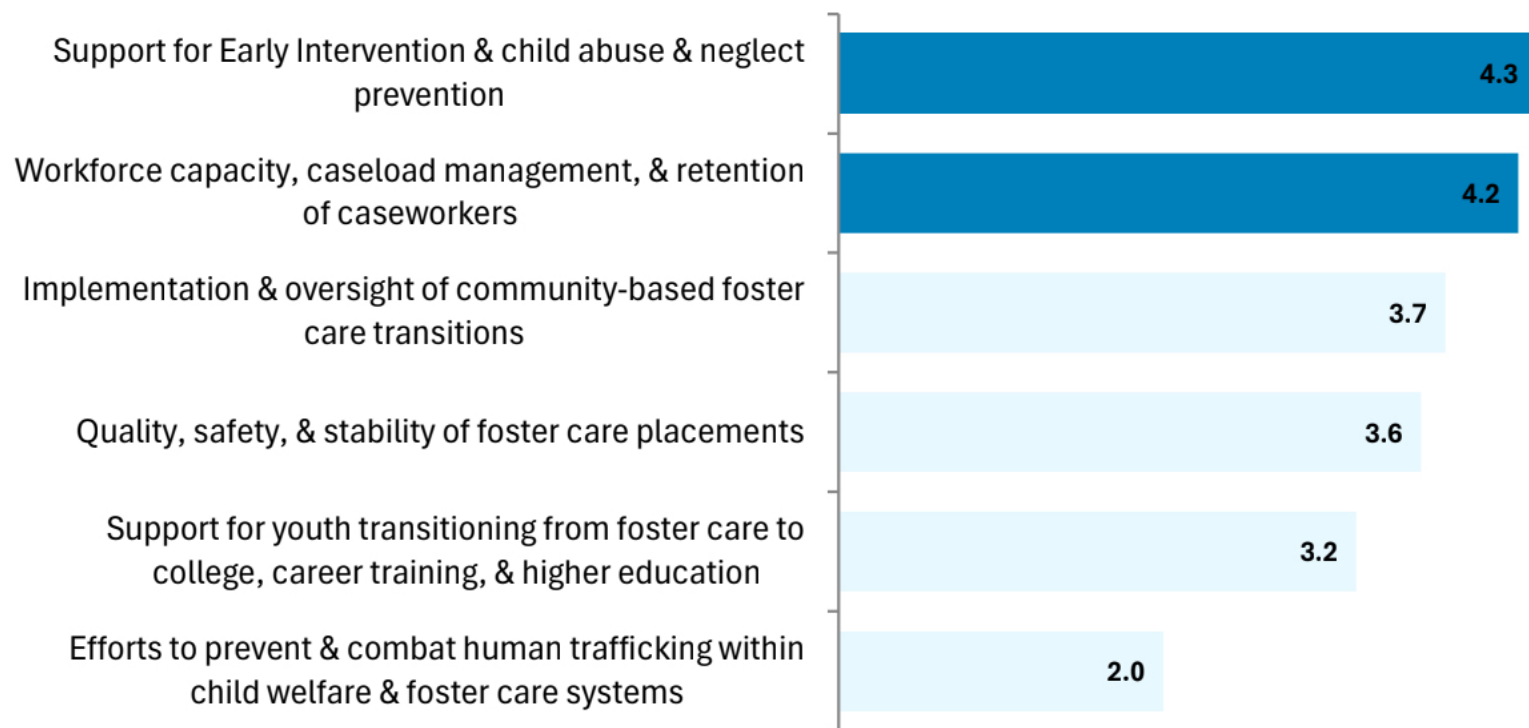


The CH
Foundation
The Legacy of Christine De Vitt

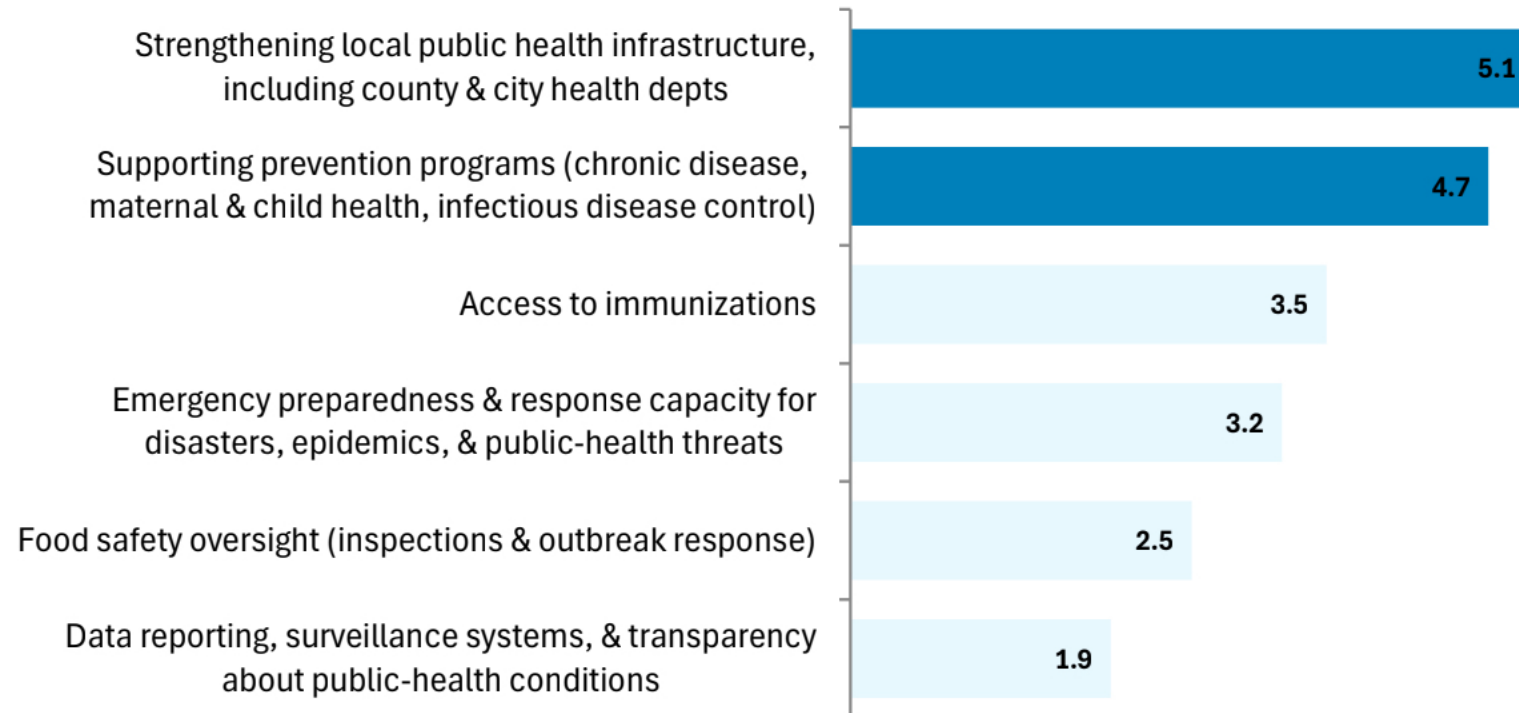
Sunset and the Permian

- Research – Hearings – Bill – Renewal
- 2027 Sunset Commission process will set path for health and human services for the next decade. Every crucial HHS agency up for scrutiny.
- Communities and philanthropists across Texas are mobilizing, especially in West Texas/Panhandle.
- Multiple foundations, led by Abell-Hanger Foundation, coordinated regional effort to collect feedback from thought leaders to provide directly to lawmakers and Sunset.

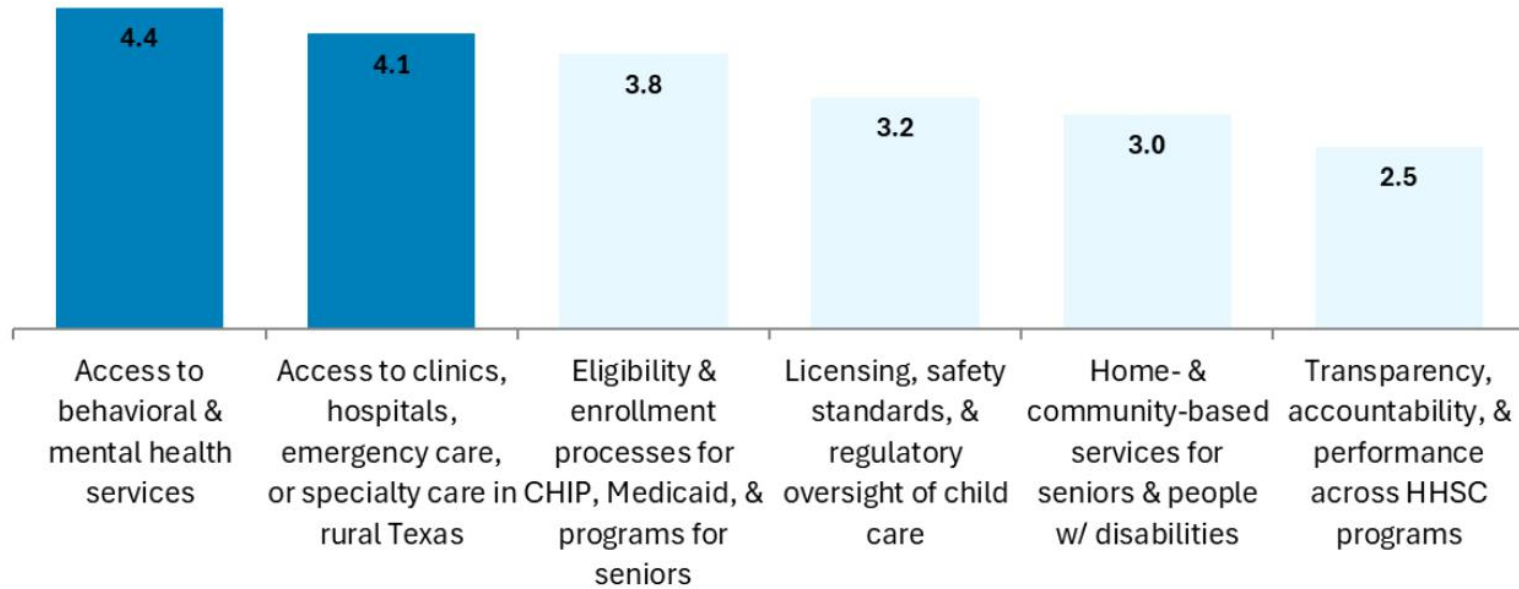
1. In the context of the Sunset Commission's review of DFPS, support for **early intervention, prevention, and **workforce capacity** were ranked as most important.**



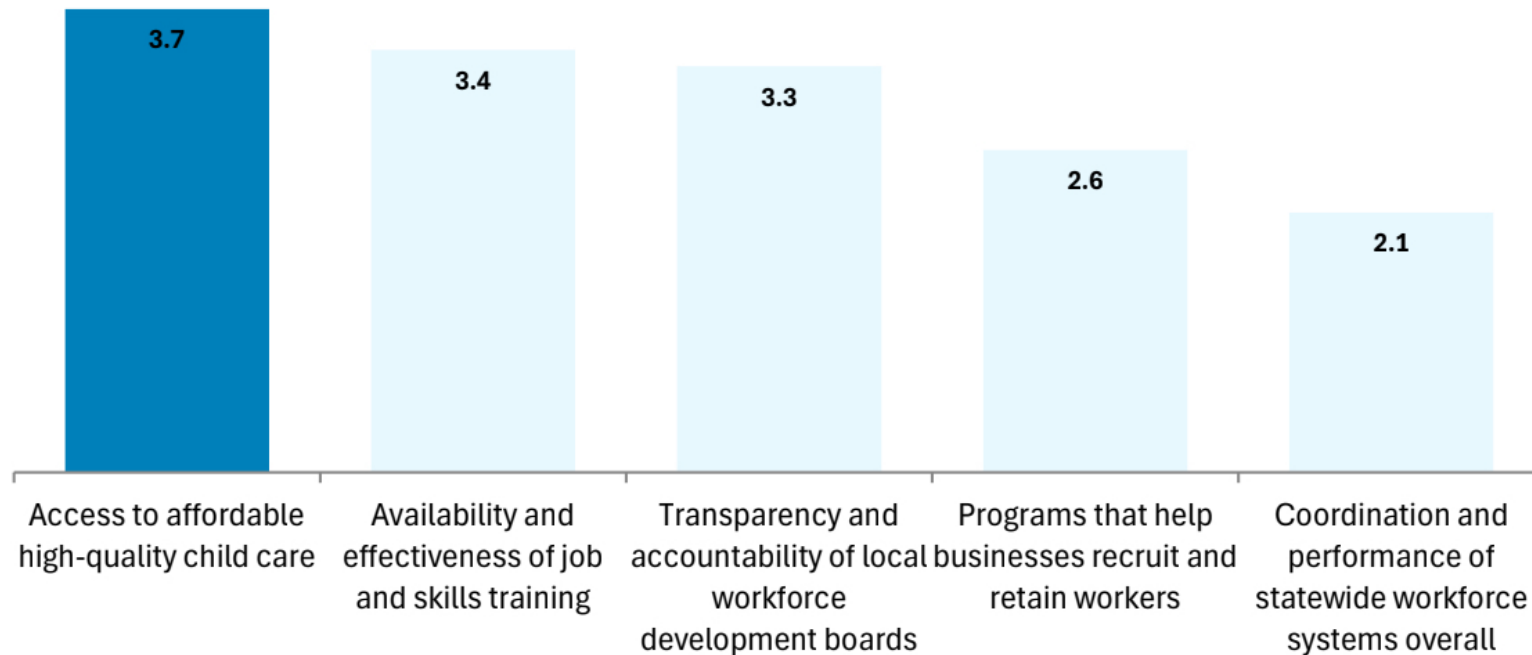
2. In the context of the Sunset Commission's review of DSHS, strengthening local public health infrastructure and supporting prevention were ranked as most important.



3. In the context of the Sunset Commission's review of HHSC, access to behavioral & mental health services and access to clinics, hospitals, emergency care, or specialty care in rural Texas were ranked as most important to address.



4. In the context of the Sunset Commission's review of TWC, **access to affordable high-quality child care** was ranked as most important to address.





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HUGE Shout Out to Team Sunset:
Smart Foundation Advocacy, Texas Style

Texas State Budget – Outlook Is Cloudy

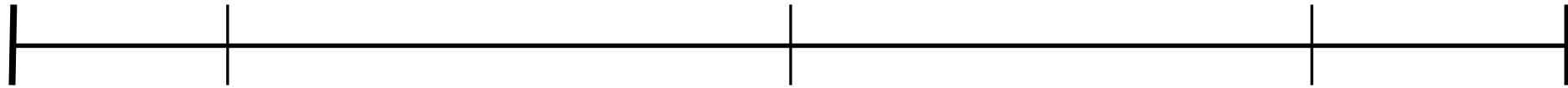
- (Brand New) Texas Comptroller Don Huffines has big power:
 - January 2027 – “**Biennial Revenue Estimate**” tells the Legislature how much it CAN spend in the next two-year budget cycle.
 - May/ June 2027 – “**Budget Certification**” tells the Legislature if it’s passed budget meets the Biennial Revenue Estimate.
- The Big Three (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of House) run the Legislative Budget Board. LBB has directed ALL state agencies to produce Legislative Appropriations Requests that reflect a 3% across the board cut.
- Huge liabilities (SNAP, vouchers, and Property Tax Cuts) and big opportunities (Border reimbursement and End of Data Center tax exemption) make prognostication harder than ever.

Philanthropy Public Policy Continuum

RESEARCH

ADVOCACY

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT



There is **no wrong place** on the continuum.

There is only **your philanthropy's** place.

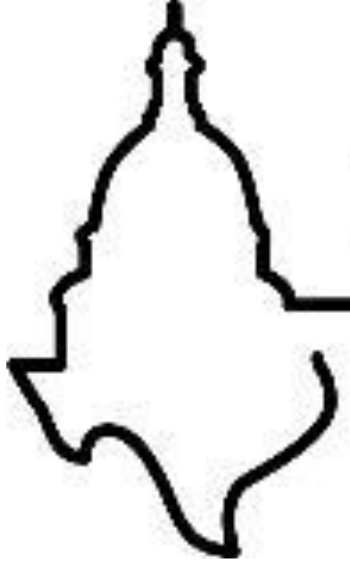
Find your **friends elsewhere** on the continuum.



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What **YOU CAN DO** now...

- Reach out to elected officials today. Right now.
- Monitor the **Texas Sunset Commission**
 - Hearings on critical agencies
 - Reports and Recommendations for Reform
- Keep Tabs on **Interim Hearings and Interim Charges**
- Comment on Agencies' "**Legislative Appropriations Requests**"
- **Draft bills** (psstttt... ChatGPT). Ask local legislators to file.
- Be present and visible – even if you never come to Austin.



FRONTERA

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- Please provide your feedback for this session [HERE](#)

