



1994 | **30 YEARS** | 2024

88TH LEGISLATIVE RECAP

REGULAR SESSION
SPECIAL SESSIONS 1-4

During the regular session, the 88th Legislature passed many successful pieces of legislation that will keep Texas moving forward on a more globally competitive path. In the second-called special session, the legislature agreed to historic property tax reduction bills. However, after four special sessions, a handful of high-profile policy matters remain incomplete including Texas public school funding measures and school choice. It is unlikely that Governor Abbott will call another session in 2024 to address these outstanding items given the current political climate at the Capitol.

Multiple issues passed during the regular and special sessions that required constitutional amendments to take effect or be funded and voters passed these with overwhelming support during the election held on November 7, 2023. These include an amendment to create and fund the [Texas University Fund](#) (Prop. 5) and an amendment to create and fund the [Texas Water Fund](#) (Prop.6). The TBLC also supported the [property tax reduction amendment](#) (Prop. 4) and the amendment to create the [Broadband Infrastructure Fund](#) (Prop. 8).

Included below is an outline of the legislation signed into law by Governor Abbott associated with our priorities. Please contact TBLC Vice President of Policy, Kelle Kieschnick, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the session's outcomes in more detail.

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TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bolster middle school college and career advising by strengthening the alignment to high school and postsecondary pathways.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

SB 2124 (math pathways bill) establishes a consistent, **statewide opt-out math pathways policy**: students performing in the top 40% on their 5th grade math assessment (STAAR or locally administered measure) are automatically enrolled in an advanced math course in 6th grade to set them on the ideal course for Algebra I in 8th grade. Increases enrollment in high-level math courses by requiring districts to offer advanced math classes for high-achieving middle school students, regardless of their background or geographic location.

TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Preserve and Fund the Comprehensive School Finance Reform initiatives in HB 3 (86th Legislature).**
- Maintain rigor in state standards and leverage evidence-based best practices to improve classroom instruction and student outcomes.**
- Preserve annual assessments, maintain accountability standards, and defend the A-F System in our K-12 public school system.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

HB 1605 (High Quality Instructional Materials “HQIM” bill) increases the **availability of and resources for HQIM** and Open Education Resources, revamping the state’s instructional review process. Provides open educational resources approved by the State Board of Education and aligned to state standards in grades K-8 for use in classrooms. A \$500 million investment offers these critical materials to schools, assisting new teachers with lesson planning while ensuring more rigorous, grade-level instruction in our classrooms.

HB 1416 (high-impact tutoring bill) maintains **evidence-based tutoring ratios** of 1 teacher to 4 students while allowing **greater flexibility** in other aspects of required supplemental education by: relaxing hourly requirements from 30 to 15 based on academic need; prohibiting tutoring in more than 2 subjects; prioritizing Reading & Math; and removing Accelerated Learning Committees while maintaining robust parent engagement. Ensures high-quality tutoring requirements remain in place for Texas students, facilitating continued recovery from the pandemic’s impact on student outcomes.

HB 1 (state appropriations bill) **preserves funding for HB 3’s school finance reforms** established during the 86th session and ensures their effectiveness by:

- Creates College, Career, and Military Readiness Study
- Requires TEA to study post-secondary outcomes of students and how they correlate to student programming in high school, allowing the state to better inform its course and program offerings.

Along with passing these priority bills, the 88th legislative session also **maintained a rigorous, reliable A-F accountability system** with a focus on core academic skills.

TBLC RECOMMENDATION

- Advocate for the recommendations of the Teacher Vacancy Task Force to address teacher retention and recruitment challenges across Texas.**

Although the regular session fell short on implementing many of the recommendations of the [Teacher Vacancy Task Force](#) (TVTF), there were some bills passed that impact educators including:

- [HB 621](#): creating a temporary certification to teach career and technology education for certain military service members and first responders.
- [HB 2729](#): improving teacher requirements to support high quality prekindergarten programs.
- [HB 2929](#): addressing restrictions on the accumulation of continuing education and training hours required for classroom teachers and public school counselors.
- [HB 4363](#): establishing the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program for certain students at public institutions of higher education in order to recruit, prepare, and retain a talented and diverse workforce of career teachers to be leaders in their field.
- [SB 10](#): relating to certain benefits paid by the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Provides a one-time additional payment to eligible TRS retirees who are at least 75 years old and provides for a cost-of-living adjustment to eligible retirees who retired prior to December 31, 2021.

TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for the recommendations of the Texas Commission on Community College Finance that strengthen K12, higher education, and workforce alignment that prepare students for in demand careers.**
- Support equitable access to dual credit, Early College High School, and Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (PTECH), with a focus on increasing the number of students that enroll and earn applicable college credit, degrees, and credentials of value while in Texas high schools.**

[HB 8](#) (community college finance reform bill) enacts 7 out of 9 of the recommendations from the [Texas Commission on Community College Finance](#) (remaining 2 did not require legislation). Reforming our state's community college finance system, this \$683 million investment places Texas at the forefront of national higher education reform by **focusing on successful student outcomes and prioritizing proven value in the workforce for community college credential offerings**. By incentivizing credential completion and transfers to 4-year institutions, more Texans will earn the credentials needed for good-paying jobs in high-demand fields.

HB 8 also **improves affordability** of community college by expanding the availability of the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG) program, while maintaining the provisions of the Texas Dream Act allowing Texans without legal status to pay in-state tuition at state institutions of higher education.

Additionally, HB 8 increases access to dual credit for students across Texas and incentivizes completion through performance funding. It establishes the Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program that **provides economically disadvantaged high school students with access to dual credit at no cost** putting them on a pathway to postsecondary success.

In addition to historic community college finance reform, the 88th legislature made a **generational investment of \$3 billion in our higher education system to support a more globally competitive Texas**. [HB 1595](#) and HJR 3 (Texas University Fund and constitutional amendment) creates an endowment for higher education systems not receiving support from the Permanent University Fund endowment to ensure that these institutions are not only competitive across Texas, but nationally.

TBLC RECOMMENDATION

- Provide statutory authority to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to enforce the Texas Transfer Framework and related initiatives.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

SB 1887 (early college education and transferability bill) creates the Texas Direct Transfer Degree for early college high school students, streamlines the transfer of course credit among public institutions of higher education and gives authority to the Commissioner of Higher Education to resolve transfer disputes.

TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand opportunities for paid work-based learning, apprenticeships and other opportunities that provide students with meaningful work experience, and create connected pathways to marketable skills, degrees, and industry recognized credentials.**
- Ensure the Texas Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative promotes the effective expansion of high quality work-based learning opportunities at scale, including transparent, measurable outcomes that promote lifelong learning and reskilling opportunities for all Texans from secondary students through adult learners.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

HB 1 (state appropriations bill) includes provisions to streamline and eliminate administrative barriers for apprenticeship and other work-based learning providers to increase the availability of such programs throughout Texas.

HB 1703 (workforce data modernization bill) provides the state with data needed to ensure taxpayer-funded workforce development programs are delivering a return-on-investment to Texans.

HB 1755 (Lone Star Workforce of the Future Fund) establishes the fund with **\$5 million to provide grants for performance-based workforce training programs**, including work-based learning opportunities, that provide Texans with the skills needed to earn a job with a self-sustaining wage in a high-demand occupation. Performance benchmarks require that programs successfully transition at least 50 percent of participants from low wage work or unemployment to full-time jobs with a self-sustaining wage within six months of training program completion.

HB 2209 (Rural Pathways Excellence Program) expands options for rural school districts to provide students with college and career pathways that lead to postsecondary success and earning a family-sustaining wage in their hometown. Incentivizes rural districts to form collaborative partnerships with institutions of higher education and businesses to better serve students and grow the economic development of the region.

HB 4451 (TWC apprenticeship data bill) tracks TWC programs providing apprenticeship opportunities for emerging and high-demand industries; establishing data and analysis needed to expand apprenticeships in these fields.

WATER SUPPLY & INFRASTRUCTURE

TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support continued fiscal stewardship in managing the corpus of the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), and continued implementation of projects included in the State Water Plan and financed through SWIFT.**
- Support efforts to further develop the state water planning process and implementation of projects resulting from that process.**
- Expand agency capacity to allow the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to adequately address state water needs, such as water supply development, flood control mitigation and infrastructure repairs.**
- Support legislation related to, and an investment of state fiscal resources in, science necessary to address water challenges facing the state, including Surface Water Availability Models and Groundwater Availability Models.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

[SB 28](#) & [SJR 75](#) (water omnibus bill and constitutional amendment) **invests \$1 billion for water infrastructure** in two new dedicated water funds administered by the Texas Water Development Board aimed at repairing aging, deteriorating water systems and creating new water supplies.

[HB 2460](#) (Water Availability Models “WAM” bill) requires the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to obtain or develop updated water availability models for the Guadalupe, Lavaca, Nueces, San Antonio, San Jacinto, and Trinity River basins.

In addition to significant support for water, the legislature **invested \$1.5 billion to expand broadband internet service to underserved and unserved areas** of the state. [HB 9](#) & HJR 125 created the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund and the constitutional amendment to support it.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TBLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support a new, modern, and transparent economic development program that will ensure Texas’ economic security, promote technological and manufacturing independence, help solve the supply chain and shortage crisis, and create new capital investments in our communities.**
- Maintain a tax and regulatory environment that encourages innovation and job growth.**

Associated Legislation Signed by the Governor:

[HB 5](#) (state economic development incentives bill) established agreements authorizing a limitation on taxable value of certain property to provide for the creation of jobs and the generation of state and local tax revenue.

Once again, the TBLC had a successful legislative session thanks to you, our members, providing effective and commonsense recommendations to the Texas Legislature.

The TBLC is the voice of Texas business leaders and with another successful legislative session behind us, we will move forward stronger than ever, as we continue our mission to build a more globally competitive Texas.