



March 27, 2025

**To: House Subcommittee on Academic and Career-Oriented Education**

**Re: Testimony FOR House Bill 117 by Representative Schoolcraft**

Good Morning Chairman Ashby and Members,

My name is Kelle Kieschnick and I am the Vice President of Policy with the Texas Business Leadership Council testifying in support of House Bill 117. We are a non-partisan network of business leaders advancing policies to support a more globally competitive Texas.

For Texas to continue leading in a rapidly evolving economy, we must prioritize a well-prepared workforce that begins with strong early childhood education. The current fragmented governance structure of Texas's early childhood system undermines this goal, creating inefficiencies, limiting access to high-quality programs, and ultimately diminishing our state's ability to produce a globally competitive talent pipeline. HB 117 offers a strategic approach to address these challenges and maximize our investment in early education through the creation of the ***Governor's Task Force on Governance on Early Childhood Education and Care***.

A robust Early Childhood Education system directly impacts Texas's economic prosperity in two main ways:

1) **Strengthening Workforce Participation & Business Productivity:**

Parents often face barriers to workforce participation due to inadequate childcare options. The current disjointed system costs Texas businesses \$10 billion annually in lost productivity. A more efficient system would better support families and boost economic output.

2) **Developing a Future-Ready Workforce:** Only 52% of Texas students currently enter kindergarten with the necessary skills to succeed. Many children never get caught up to grade level under our current system, ultimately affecting their ability to pursue postsecondary opportunities and contribute to an economy that needs skilled workers.

Establishing this Governor's Task Force will allow for a comprehensive review of the current system to provide strategic recommendations for the next legislature.

We commend Rep. Schoolcraft for this bill and thank the Subcommittee for your work. **HB 117 presents an opportunity to strengthen Texas businesses, empower families, and advance a more globally competitive Texas.**

Respectfully,

Kelle Kieschnick

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