

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives



May 29, 2017

Friends,

This Memorial Day, the Texas House has adjourned Sine Die bringing the 85th regular session to a close. It has been an honor to once again serve our community and be your voice in Austin. Thank you to everyone who contacted me to share your views. In the coming weeks and months, I will send out updates on passed legislation. Additionally, we will begin sending out our electronic newsletter on a monthly basis. If you have any questions about legislation or if there is something you would like for me to address in the newsletter, please let me know by emailing me at Angie.Button@house.texas.gov.

Balanced Budget

The Texas Legislature is constitutionally required to do one thing, pass a budget. The Texas House gave final approval Saturday to a budget proposal that keeps state spending level while making significant investments in child protection and mental health care.

SB 1 appropriates about \$107 billion in General Revenue and almost \$1 billion from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund. Including federal funds and other dollars, the budget totals \$217 billion.

We did begin the budget process with a sizable shortfall, but we are ending this session with a balanced budget that invests in some very important priorities. I voted for SB 1 because, while this budget is not perfect, we kept overall spending low while addressing many of our state's priorities.

The Legislature made it a priority this session to improve Child Protective Services and the state's foster care system. The budget provides an additional \$508 million for child protection, including \$88 million in new funding for almost 600 CPS caseworkers, \$85.4 million to enhance foster care provider rates, and \$32.5 million in additional support for family members who take in abused children, also known as kinship care.

The 597 new CPS caseworkers are in addition to the 829 new caseworkers that state leaders authorized in late December and that legislators formally approved with the passage of HB 2, the budget bill for the rest of the current fiscal year.

The budget also appropriates \$350 million to increase the contribution rate and address a projected shortfall in TRS-Care, the health care program for retired teachers. Without that funding, retired educators would have faced significant increases in their health care premiums and deductibles. In addition, the budget avoids the severe cuts to higher education that were discussed earlier in the legislative session.

The final version of Senate Bill 1 also includes:

- \$75 million in education funding to offset declines in property values in some school districts.
- An additional \$71.5 million for Texas Grant scholarships, allowing the program to reach 92 percent of eligible students.
- More than \$100 million to address critical cybersecurity and IT needs across state agencies.
- \$160 million for deferred maintenance at state schools and hospitals.
- \$90 million for critical life and safety repairs across state facilities.
- A 25% restoration of rates for Medicaid therapy services.
- \$16 million for the Governor's University Research Initiative so we can continue recruiting the brightest minds to our state.
- \$86 million for the Texas Enterprise Fund which is our state's deal closing fund to bring jobs to Texas.



Discussing Dallas Police and Fireman Pension Legislation with Chairman Dan Flynn of the Pensions Committee.

It is an honor to serve as your state Representative.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

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Angie.Button@house.texas.gov