



## 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Priorities

COVID-19 has dramatically impacted our already vulnerable child protection system, put unimaginable strain on families with young children, and exacerbated root causes of child maltreatment like substance abuse and behavioral health concerns. 5,300 more children may be at risk of entering the Texas foster care system as a result and many more will be impacted. Texas can't afford that additional \$4.4 billion price tag nor can our children. Texas must invest in proven programs that prevent abuse and save \$1.26-\$8.08 per \$1 invested by supporting community and family efforts to create safe and nurturing environments for the 7.5 million children who call Texas home.

It's time to do more of what works and less of what doesn't for Texas children and their families.

### 1 Strengthen Proven Strategies To Prevent Abuse and Keep Families Together

- Primary Prevention (Budget)

Protect and invest in community-based, primary child abuse prevention programs for children prenatal to age 5 when development matters most and the highest ROI is realized through (HOPES) Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support and (NFP) Nurse-Family Partnership.

(!) Prevention programs with proven returns (\$1.26-\$8.08) only make up 5% of the existing \$2.1 billion DFPS budget.

- Family First Prevention Services Act (Budget)

Prevent entries into foster care by supporting relatives and increasing access to in-home parenting programs, substance use services, and behavioral health service opportunities under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Ensure data is collected and reported regarding evidence-based and trauma-informed services provided when a family is participating in family preservation services.

(!) Preventing 3% of removals would save Texas \$20 million.

- Public Health Prevention Strategies (Budget and Bill)

Expand access to short term, nurse visitation for newborns (Family Connects) to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, reduce child abuse, and increase efficiency in resource and referral systems for families.

(!) Family Connects reduces child maltreatment by 39% and returns \$3.02/\$1 in ER costs alone.

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (Bill)

Develop and implement a statewide strategic plan to address causes and symptoms of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and their disproportionate impacts on children and families of color.

(!) Child abuse and neglect in 2019 alone will cost Texas over \$55 billion dollars. Inaction is not free.

- Effective Resource and Referral Systems for Texas Families (Budget)

Strengthen the Texas Information and Referral Network (211) to create efficiencies and provide quality information and referrals for parents and families to better ensure that families can access the right services at the right time to prevent crises that might result in trauma for their children. Utilize 211 to increase efficiency at Statewide Intake and ensure families are connected to needed services if abuse/neglect is not indicated.

(!) The benefits of 2-1-1 exceed its cost by over 50% and result in \$15 million of benefits for young children.

### 2 Increase Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness in CPS

- Real-time Child Abuse Data (Bill)

Ensure child abuse data is made publicly available monthly to increase accountability and show real-time trends of safety and key child protection outcomes.

(!) Communities can't effectively protect kids with data that is only made available once a year.