

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives

May 8, 2009

Dear Friend:

I want to wish all of the mothers and mother figures in District 112 a very happy Mothers Day. It has been a very long week here in Austin. The House has taken up several important pieces of legislation. One of which is HB 300 relating to the continuation and functions of the Texas Department of Transportation. We debated this bill until midnight last night and took it up again first thing this morning. I will provide a full report on the specifics of this bill next week.

Full-Day Prekindergarten Program for Children in Need

HB 130 was another important piece of legislation that was heavily debated on the house floor this week. I proudly co-authored this bipartisan piece of legislation along with 100 House members and I am pleased to say it passed the house today.

Currently, Texas funds half-day programs for participating districts, but those districts must rely on grants or local funding to pay for the remainder of the day. This bill creates a grant program that schools can apply to if they choose to implement a full-day prekindergarten program for children at least three years old who:

- Are educationally disadvantaged;
- Are a homeless child;
- Are the child of an active duty member of the armed forces;
- Are the child of a member of the armed forces who was injured or killed while serving on active duty; or
- Are or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services

HB 130 would include high-quality, research-based components in prekindergarten programs, while maintaining district control and oversight.

I believe, along with several fiscally conservative co-authors, including Representatives Sid Miller, Jim Jackson, and Jim Pitts, that HB 130 is a wise investment into the future of our state and will save millions of dollars in future costs. According to a Texas A&M study, for every dollar Texas spends on prekindergarten, the state earns a return on investment of \$3.50. Students who attend prekindergarten need less remediation and are less likely to enter the criminal justice system, more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to go to college, and more likely to become productive members of society with higher-paying jobs.

Full-day programs are a significant factor in closing the achievement gap that currently exists. The program will allow Texas to reach its most at-risk students as early as possible in order to have the greatest effect. Children who attend prekindergarten are more likely to be ready to begin learning in kindergarten and 44 percent less likely to drop out of school. More students will now participate in full-day prekindergarten programs because it alleviates the need for midday transportation for working families.

Additionally, this legislation would increase the quality of prekindergarten programs by promoting collaboration between private providers and school districts to share best practices and resources. Partnerships would decrease the number of new classrooms that needed to be built to accommodate students.

Economic Development - Qualified Manufacturing Project Zones

Earlier this session I co-authored HB 4525, an economic development bill, with my colleague Rep. Tan Parker. I am happy to announce that yesterday afternoon, this bill passed the house.

The United States has lost more than 4 million manufacturing jobs since 2000. Between 2001 and 2007 (before the recession even began), Texas lost 202,900 manufacturing jobs. This number is second only to California. As the national economy struggles, each state is vying with one another for manufacturing jobs. I am proud to say that with the passage of this legislation, Texas is ready to compete.

House Bill 4525 provides workforce development money for manufacturers that invest at least \$200 million in new or expanded facilities in Texas and create at least 300 new full-time permanent jobs in Texas. This bill stimulates manufacturing jobs in Texas and helps this great state maintain its global competitiveness.

Working for You



Rep. Button Discussing Legislation with Rep. Creighton on the House Floor

It is such an honor to represent you. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail District112.Button@house.state.tx.us.