

ANGIE CHEN BUTTON



The State of Texas House of Representatives



March 3, 2017

Friends,

It has been a very productive week in Austin. The Higher Education Committee heard testimony this week from 4-year universities and community colleges across the state concerning the affordability, accessibility, and quality of education in our higher education institutions. This gives us a good reference point as we begin to hear bills later this month.

The Economic & Small Business Development Committee, which I have the honor of chairing, held its first organizational meeting of the session. The committee heard testimony from multiple government organizations including the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the Office of the Governor, and the State Comptroller of Public Accounts. These organizations testified on the state of our state's economy, as well as the economic outlook for Texas. I was glad to hear testimony from Mr. Keith Phillips, senior economist from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, that Texas's economy is weathering the uncertainty of the energy market and expects 2% statewide job growth in 2017. He shared that the Dallas Metropolitan area experienced 3.1% job growth in 2016. This

is a result of our pro-business policies and economic development strategies. The committee will work hard this session to not only maintain, but improve upon those policies.



Discussing economic development issues with the Subcommittee Chairman of Small Business, Will Metcalf.

Child Protection

This week, the Texas House approved the first two major bills of the 2017 legislative session, unanimously passing legislation to improve child protection in the state.

HB 4, provides additional support for family members who care for a child who has been removed from his or her home. Members of the House also approved HB 5 which would give the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) more independence by creating a stand-alone agency with a Commissioner appointed by the Governor. DFPS, which oversees Child Protective Services, is currently part of the state's Health and Human Services Commission.

Both bills reflect months of study and deliberation by an informal workgroup of House Members that Speaker Joe Straus convened to focus on child protection last year.

"Today the House showed that improving child protection is among our highest priorities," Speaker Straus said. "We have taken a couple of very important steps toward providing better protection and care for children in terrible circumstances, with more to come in the weeks ahead."

Governor Greg Abbott identified reforming Child Protective Services as an emergency issue in this year's legislative session. In addition to the bills approved Wednesday, the House has proposed a budget that would fund additional staff and higher salaries at CPS, where annual turnover among caseworkers is around 30 percent.

I am very proud of the Texas House for putting children first. I look forward to continuing our work to protect our youth.



Speaking to members of the Richardson Chamber, City of Richardson, and RISD during their Richardson Day at the Capitol this week. In attendance were Mayor Paul Voelker, Mayor Pro Tem Mark Solomon, Councilmember Mabel Simpson, Councilmember Scott Dunn, City Manager Dan Johnson, Chamber President Bill Sproull, UTD President Dr. Richard Benson, Chamber Chairman Bryan Marsh, RISD Superintendent Dr. Jeannie Stone, RISD Board President Kim Caston, and Board Members Jean Bono, Eron Linn, Katie Patterson.



Monday was PTA Day at the Capitol and I met with groups from both GISD (pictured) and RISD. They came down to advocate to their elected officials on behalf of their school districts.

It is an honor to serve as your State Representative. Please continue to communicate your views on issues that are important to you.

Sincerely,

Angie Chen Button

If you would like to be added or removed from this mailing, please e-mail Angie.Button@house.texas.gov