



PRO-BUSINESS • PRO-TEXAS

FOR OVER 75 YEARS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2011

Contact: Bill Hammond

Phone: (512) 695-1960

TEXAS MUST FUND PROVEN PRE-K PROGRAMS, MATERIALS

TAB calls early childhood education, instructional materials a funding priority; long-term impact on school, workforce readiness cited as key reason lawmakers should commit resources

DALLAS, TX—Texas Association of Business President and CEO came to Dallas today to highlight the business community’s commitment to funding for early childhood education and instructional materials. Current versions of the state budget for 2012-2013 shortchange early childhood education and place the long-term prosperity of our state at risk, according to Hammond.

“Our state is falling short on our commitment to Texas school children and businesses that rely on a well-educated workforce if we don’t make an investment in these proven early childhood education programs and materials,” said TAB President and CEO Bill Hammond. “Pre-Kindergarten education is a key component to our long-term success as a state.”

TAB recently released a comprehensive report, “Dream Big, Texas: Quality Pre-K Education is a Prerequisite for Prosperity,” that outlines the business community’s recommendation for strategic investment in proven early childhood education programs and instructional materials.

The group’s specific legislative recommendation include:

- Fully fund the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) Pre-Kindergarten Early Start (PKES) Grant at \$104.3 million per year;
- Fully fund the TEA’s Texas School Ready! Project at \$7.5 million (GR) per year;
- Require the Texas Workforce Commission to fund the Texas School Ready! Project by maximizing federal childcare funds the state agency receives; and
- Dedicate the full \$550 million necessary to meet the textbook needs of Texas students under the Texas Education Agency’s Proclamation 2011.

“We cannot turn a blind eye to the role early childhood education plays in the long-term prosperity and workforce readiness of our state,” said Hammond. “Our future prosperity is fundamentally linked to the educational foundation that high quality Pre-Kindergarten provides through teachers, tools, textbooks and other important resources.”

Hammond pointed to the fact that Texas spent \$1.3 million every school day during 2008-09 re-educating students who had already attended kindergarten and first grade. Kindergarten and first

graders are retained more often than students in any other grade except for ninth graders. Early grade retention cost the state of Texas almost a quarter of a billion dollars in re-education costs in 2008-09.

The Coalition for Pre-K Quality and Accountability also supports the recommendations outlined in the TAB report on early childhood education. **The full report is online at <http://www.txbiz.org/uploads/Pre-KBookF.pdf>**

The report also includes data on retention rates and best practices in early childhood education.

During a recent discussion with Texas lawmakers, Steve Murdock, a sociology professor at Rice University and former state demographer, said census data shows that Texas public schools have more and more low-income kids and persistently high dropout rates and changes, and the future of Texas will contain more long-term unemployment, more poverty, more citizens depending on state assistance, and higher incarceration rates. Murdock said the solution must include doing more to prepare preschoolers: “The data seems to show that if a kid walks into a learning situation for the first time when they are 5 or 6, that’s probably too late.”

“Let’s do right by Texas children. Let’s do right by Texas’ job creators, the businesses that drive our economy forward,” said Hammond. “Our message to the legislature is simple: Texas must fund its obligation to purchase the new Pre-K instructional materials and support early childhood education.”

###

Founded in 1922, the Texas Association of Business is a broad-based, bipartisan organization representing more than 3,000 small and large Texas employers and 200 local chambers of commerce. Follow us on Twitter @txbiz and find us on Facebook at fb.me/txbiz.