



Ways & Means
April 26, 2011

Texans Care for Children is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to the children of Texas. We look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners and members throughout the state who together represent hundreds of thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda. We also co-convene various stakeholder groups which bring together a wide range of organizations, families, and advocates around our areas of focus, which are: family economic security; infant, child and maternal health; children’s mental health; child welfare; and juvenile justice and at-risk youth.

More than any one area of the budget, our partners have been calling upon us to be a voice for our state working to build a budget that is responsive to actual state need. Our members and partners see that state savings can translate into immediate increases in local costs and that neglecting social service needs today will only require more costly amelioration.

With scrutiny on every social service dollar spent, while at the same time huge slashes are being made to the budget – cuts that are eliminating and gutting so many critical programs -- we believe it is time for our state to give that same level of scrutiny to those dollars left on the table and the entities given a “free pass” when it comes to paying taxes, while our working families continue to shoulder so much of the financial burden.

HB 1308 by Villareal balances scrutiny of dollars spent with scrutiny to revenue the state chooses to forego, and provides an opportunity for public input in this review. We have umbrella policies for revenue collection that are riddled with exceptions and carve outs. We understand that some of these may well be warranted, but we ask that these be given equal scrutiny as expenditures— noting that the usefulness of some of these exceptions may have expired, or may deserve new consideration given our state’s financial picture in any given budget cycle.

As our current budget debate so painfully underscores -- as we see debate over two budgets, neither of which is able to keep up with current state needs -- we need to ensure that our state has ample opportunity to carefully consider all our options. HB 1308 provides a systematic process for doing so.

Thank you for your time and commitment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the staff of Texans Care for Children at 512.473.2274.

Respectfully,

Eileen Garcia
Chief Executive Officer