

Austin LGBT Chamber 87th Legislative Priorities

Economic Prosperity & Workforce

- Maintain sufficient funding in Texas Enterprise Fund
- Reauthorize Chapter 313
- Maintain Chapter 312
- Protect Other Economic Development Tools: Protect the Skills Development Fund, Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas, Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program, the Event Trust Funds Program – Major Events Reimbursement Program, Sales & Use Tax Exemptions (to include the R&D tax credit), Enterprise & Tax Increment Financing Districts, Miscellaneous Provisions Related to Planning (Ch. 312, 380, 381).
- Support low taxes
- Promote a Diverse Workforce – Support non-discrimination legislation that would make the state more competitive for talent, tourism and investment. Oppose legislation that could impact workforce recruitment efforts, complicate human resources administration, or undermine the business community's commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Support Next Generation High Growth Industries – Promote legislation to enhance the State's competitive environment for high-growth industries, including but not limited to cloud computing, AI/ML and cyber security.
- Improve State Procurement – Support reforms to state procurement policies in order to enable state and local governments to include LGBTBEs
- Oppose state and local infringement on employer flexibility to establish hiring practices and employee compensation and benefits program as dictated by the free and competitive job market and in accordance with established federal law.

Telecom & Infrastructure

- Support broadband expansion by exploring opportunities to draw down capital from programs like the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, USDA's Broadband ReConnect, and other available funds.
- Oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to govern its residents' investment in municipally- owned utilities or that negatively impacts the current status of Austin Energy, including rate cases approved by City Council.
- Oppose legislation that limits the City's ability to regulate and enforce the City's building codes, land use and zoning regulations, floodplain regulations, and registration or license requirements to the standards adopted by the City in order to address the health, safety, and public welfare of the community within the City's limits and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Racial and Social Equity

- Rejecting racism and standing for equality, justice, and respect are essential to a stronger community, a healthier future and a better Central Texas for all. We support policies that aid in overcoming racism and social inequities, including access to employment opportunities, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.

- Protect Austin’s civil rights ordinances and oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City’s ability to protect Austinites’ employment, housing, public accommodation, and other civil rights that would threaten Austin’s welcoming environment to businesses, conventions, and events and would tarnish Austin’s status as an inclusive community for all.
- Support legislation that promotes equity for residents of Austin including pay-equity, education-equity, housing- equity, and health-equity.

Public Safety

- Support legislation to reduce the improper or excessive use of force by police, enhance implicit-bias and de-escalation training, expand civilian oversight of police departments, and improve relations between police and those they serve.

Homelessness

- Support legislation and funding to provide social services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health disorders, and/or substance use disorders.

Healthcare

- Oppose anti LGBT actions within healthcare system
- Support NDOs in healthcare access
- Reduce the number of uninsured and improve access and affordability of healthcare in Texas
- *Covid specific*
- Liability – Support legislation that addresses businesses’ concerns about liability protections while operating during a pandemic. Specifically, we support safe harbor laws that ensure businesses are held harmless when operated in a good faith effort to comply with government provided COVID protocols.
- Support legislation that would update antiquated systems for data reporting as it relates to the pandemic.
- Vaccinations – Support our state’s immunization infrastructure and the healthcare providers who deliver vaccinations.
- Austin State Hospital Funding – Fund remaining construction costs for the new Austin State Hospital. This will ensure support for the entire catchment area and provide an innovative, re-designed service delivery focused on a person-centered continuum of care.

Privacy

- To ensure regulatory certainty for business and consumers alike, legislation to protect consumer data privacy should be handled at the federal level in order to provide uniformity and standards throughout the U.S. In absence of a federal standard, the state program should support the following standards:
 - Consumer consent processes should take into account the limitations of specific devices and not be overly burdensome or prescriptive to the consumer or technology provider.
 - New privacy laws should provide strong safeguards to consumers while also allowing the industry to continue to innovate. Additionally, new laws should be based upon a uniform set of standards to avoid imposing a patchwork of policies across jurisdictions.

- Specific requirements on data collection, use, or retention should be narrowly focused on personally identifiable, highly sensitive, or proprietary information.
- Privacy laws should be limited to specific practices tied to specific harms.
- Private rights of action, civil penalties, and other tools to encourage litigation should be avoided.
- Privacy laws should apply to government entities.

Transportation

- Support legislation and funding for transportation and technology projects and initiatives dedicated to improving regional mobility; for increasing partnerships between local and state agencies to ensure improvements are well integrated and the regional mobility system is improved as a whole; and to maintaining, expanding, and improving transportation infrastructure and local transportation options.
- Support a fully funded Props 1&7, including extension of sunset dates
- Support local/regional transportation agencies to access private capital by preserving the ability to issue revenue bonds securitized by user fees. Grant local MPOs the authority to determine final project design and financing (including the use of managed lanes)
- Support legislation and funding that aligns employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services to housing that is affordable and accessible to transit.
- Support legislation that in accordance with federal law provides local governments and airport authorities with sufficient resources to provide for a safe and efficient aviation system and allows airports to be as self-sustaining as possible.

Education and Career Advancement

- Support Digital Learning
- Improve portability of credits which will reduce the cost for degree attainment
- Continue to fund and increase opportunities like the P-TECH or commensurate models for students to pursue dual-credit course offerings, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, internships and other credentials in advanced manufacturing, skilled trades, health care and IT.
- Combat COVID Learning Loss: Maintain HB3 funding and support agile TEA rules to allow school districts flexibility and funding to extend instructional days to combat COVID student learning loss and improve student outcomes.
- Modernize School Funding Formulas to Include Virtual Options: Apply the learnings from the COVID pandemic and strengthen our ability to respond to future natural disasters, pandemics, or closures by modernizing school funding formulas to include options for in-person, virtual, and blended learning.
- Support legislation and funding that creates equitable access to and availability of affordable, safe, quality child care and education for all families of children aged birth to five; affordable, safe, quality after-school programming; evidence-based home visiting programs for families with young children; and that strengthens the resiliency of the child care industry.
- Support legislation and funding that provides Austin students and residents with career pathway opportunities, including work relief programs, job training, and apprenticeship programs.
- Support legislation and funding that provides high-risk workers with public health and safety protections, support, and education related to COVID-19.
- Support legislation that promotes reliable and affordable access to the internet and related technologies.

Misc

- Oppose legislation that prohibits or restricts taxpayer funded lobbyists' ability to petition the Legislature and its elected representatives on behalf of constituents.
- Protect residents right to govern themselves and work with their City government to adopt and enforce ordinances that address the health, safety, and public welfare of the community.
- Support legislation that promotes healthy and equitable communities and economic prosperity through the protection and preservation of the region's air, land, and water and Austin's natural resources and open spaces, including policies that address the causes of the climate crisis as well as mitigation strategies.