

CLC Legislative Priorities 2016-2017

Children and Families

Education

- Support increased state funding for high quality, full-day pre-kindergarten for all Texas children, but especially for at-risk and low-income families.
- Support efforts to strengthen public education to ensure all Texas school children have access to quality public schools. This includes efforts to close the achievement gap, increase state funding for public schools, and the expansion of dropout prevention and recovery programs.
- Oppose efforts to reduce state investment in public education. This includes any attempt to divert funds from neighborhood schools to private schools.
- Oppose efforts to repeal the Texas DREAM Act.

Hunger and Poverty

- Strengthen programs to prevent hunger among high-need populations including children, homeless, rural, and elderly Texans.
- Improve access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through outreach and technology to help eligible families avoid food insecurity and afford a nutritious diet.
- Support legislation to strengthen accountability in SNAP administration to ensure needed assistance is available to participants for intended purposes and not siphoned by fraudulent behavior or predatory industries.

Foster Care

- Support increased funding for the Department of Child and Family Protective Services for the hiring of more caseworkers, prevention and intervention programs, increased adoption subsidies, and increased salaries for caseworkers and investigators.

- Support efforts to improve outcomes for foster care youth while under state supervision, support efforts to move youth to permanency, and increase supports for aging out youth.

The Stranger Among Us

Human Trafficking

- Support efforts to protect and care for victims of human trafficking, including adjustments in the regulatory structure to accommodate best practices for victim services.
- Support efforts to increase access to anti-human trafficking training for education, health, and law enforcement professionals.

Immigration

- Support border security and law enforcement policies consistent with humanitarian values.
- Support efforts to make immigration policy more consistent with the needs of American businesses and immigrant workers.
- Support efforts to ensure faith and nonprofit organizations can continue to minister and provide services to refugees that are placed in Texas.

Religious Liberty

- Support efforts to protect the right of churches and religious nonprofits to make employment decisions, facility use determinations, and doctrinal statements consistent with their religious convictions and beliefs.
- Support legislation that protects the rights of faith-based family service organizations to provide services consistent with their deeply held religious beliefs.
- Preserve the autonomy of private religious institutions by rejecting public funds for private sectarian schools through vouchers.

The Poor and the Vulnerable

Gambling Expansion

- Oppose legislation for the introduction and expansion of predatory gambling enterprises including casinos, “racinos,” Internet gambling, daily fantasy sports, slot machine-like devices, sweepstakes machines, and instant racing machines in order to generate state revenue.
- Support legislation to enhance regulation, prosecution, and penalties for illegal game rooms that operate eight-liners, sweepstakes machines, or other illegal gambling activities.
- Support legislation to abolish the Texas Lottery Commission by using data to demonstrate the predatory nature of the lottery.
- Support legislation to restrict state agencies' rule-making authority to introduce electronic versions of instant scratch lottery tickets, instant pull-tab bingo tickets, sweepstakes, and pari-mutuel wagering

Predatory Lending

- Support legislation to protect the right of local municipalities to enact ordinances stronger than state consumer protections.
- Support legislation to reduce the cost of small dollar lending in Texas and limit fees charged on payday and auto title loans that increase the likelihood of a person getting caught in a cycle of debt.

Criminal Justice

- Support efforts to expand diversion programs and specialty courts.
- Support efforts to curb fees and limit court debt to a percentage of a person's income.
- Support efforts to reduce probation revocations for minor infractions and incentivize best practices that keep those on probation at work and on the road to rehabilitation.

- Support efforts to assist in the transition of ex-offenders back into society through the development and expansion of re-entry programs, including access to basic safety-net services for those who have completed their sentence.
- Support efforts to improve community police relations including for funding for body cameras, training on implicit bias, and better data collection.
- Support efforts to improve jury instructions in capital cases to clarify an individual juror's ability to impose a sentence less than death.

Human Life

- Support pro-life legislation that reduces the number of abortions, expands access to prenatal care and services for pregnant women.
- Support efforts to expand access to quality, affordable healthcare for all Texans.
- Support efforts to reduce racial disparity and the effects of systemic racism in the state's criminal justice, child welfare, mental health, education, and health systems.