

Report: No Single Agency Is Accountable for Whether Texas' Childcare System Is Working

Analysis finds oversight of childcare policy split across five state agencies, with the Legislature, governor's task force and Sunset reviews positioned to act

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Texas invests billions of dollars each year in childcare and early childhood programs, but with oversight split across at least five state agencies, no single entity holds accountability for the system as a whole.



Today, Texas 2036 releases [The State of Childcare in Texas](#), recommending consolidated

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Tracy Ayrhart

oversight of Texas' childcare system under a single entity with the mandate to coordinate regulation, funding and outcomes measurement.

"Texas already spends billions on early childhood programs, but no one is responsible for the system as a whole," said Charles Miller, director of health and economic mobility at Texas 2036. "That's not a criticism of any one agency. It's the result of a structure that split responsibility five ways without assigning accountability for the outcome."

The report builds that case by examining the childcare system from every major perspective — families, employers, providers and taxpayers. It traces who the system serves, what the current structure costs, how fragmented governance contributes to those outcomes and what parents say they need before outlining opportunities for reform.

The report finds the consequences of the current governance structure are felt across every part of the childcare system. Texas-specific economic modeling done for this report estimates that childcare-related workforce disruptions, such as absenteeism and turnover, including the time to

refill vacated roles, cost Texas employers approximately \$7.9 billion each year.

One Amarillo employer interviewed for the report put it plainly: "I'm losing dairy workers because there is no childcare here. I can pay them, but I can't make care exist for them."

Families feel the strain as well. Among families earning less than \$35,000 annually, childcare costs eat up 19% of monthly income, and close to half of Texas parents paying for childcare report having to sacrifice quality for affordable care.

Among the findings:

- * 56.7% of Texas parents of young children surveyed for this report say childcare costs have influenced their family planning and decisions about having more children in the future.
- * Texas has approximately 2.4 million children younger than 6, but public programs, including Pre-K, Head Start and childcare subsidies, serve only about one in six.
- * At least 95,000 children were on waiting lists for childcare subsidy assistance as of late 2024, and the state cannot currently link subsidy participation to kindergarten-readiness outcomes.

The report additionally argues Texas has never resolved a basic question: is childcare an early-education strategy, or a workforce tool for Texas families? Texas 2036's statewide voter survey found that when given a choice between framing childcare as an education investment or a workforce investment, voters preferred education 56% to 38%.

"Providers, parents and employers are navigating the same system from different perspectives, and everyone feels the strain," said Miller. "Consolidating oversight can create a clear way to evaluate the system and any necessary improvements."

A window to act

The current legislative interim offers a rare window to act, with the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Care and Education and ongoing Sunset reviews of the Texas Workforce Commission and Health and Human Services Commission all positioned to take up governance changes during the 2027 legislative session.

"Texas can now see this system's challenges from all angles — what families pay, what providers are up against, what employers lose, and how the state's own programs fit together," said Tracy Ayrhart, vice president of data and research at Texas 2036. "Those pieces have never sat side by side before. Having the full picture is what turns a long-standing challenge into one Texas can actually work on."

The full report is available at texas2036.org/state-of-texas-childcare.

About Texas 2036

Texas 2036 is a nonpartisan public policy organization dedicated to improving lives and opportunities for all Texans through 2036, Texas' bicentennial year, and beyond.

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