

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3493

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

---

Hearing Date: April 13, 2021 8:00 AM

---

Veronda Durden, President and CEO

Any Baby Can

Austin, TX

As the President and CEO for Any Baby Can in Austin, TX I'm proud to represent an organization that works with families to overcome challenges and support the health and development of their children. With programs that meet clients where they are – at home, work or school – Any Baby Can helps build stability, develop skills and navigate systems so children and families reach their full potential.

I strongly encourage you to support HB 3493, championed by Representative Parker which requires developing a strategic plan by DFPS to improve prevention and early intervention services, including developing an inventory of programs and services that contribute to the prevention of child abuse, neglect, and other ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events such as child abuse/neglect or having a caregiver with substance use, mental health, family violence, or incarceration challenges. Research has shown that severe and chronic adversity can disrupt a child's neurodevelopment AND increase the likelihood of negative health, behavioral, education, and economic outcomes. In Texas, almost 1/5th of children have experienced two or more ACEs before their 18th birthday, approximately 1.4 million Texas children.

While it is a normal part of childhood development to experience challenges and stress, when a child experiences intense, frequent, or prolonged adversity without adequate support, these traumas can change physiology and disrupt development in ways that endure in their bodies for decades. However, ACEs do not have to dictate the future of a child. Prevention strategies can reduce the prevalence and impact of ACEs and increase a child's opportunity for cognitive and emotional development, health, productivity, and economic well-being.

Texas currently lacks a strategic, cross-agency and coordinated approach to preventing and mitigating the effects of childhood adversity. As a result, state investments may be ineffective, inefficient, and fail to address the root causes in a transformational way.

Preventing ACEs can reduce healthcare costs, improve economic productivity, reduce crime, and boost educational achievement. Today's children will build the Texas of tomorrow. Let's stop asking them to pay for problems we have the power to prevent!

Clayton Travis

Texas Pediatric Society

Austin, TX

On behalf of the 4,500 members of the Texas Pediatric Society (TPS), the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 3493. This bill would launch a strategic effort to prevent and mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

ACEs are traumatic events like child abuse/neglect, family violence, or having a caregiver with substance use, mental health, or incarceration challenges. In Texas, over 24% of children will experience two or more ACEs by the time they turn 18. Early life experiences are the building blocks of healthy development, and they form the architecture of the developing brain. Brains need a sturdy foundation to support future mental function and overall health. Positive interactions with caregivers help to create this

Printed on: April 29, 2021 9:55 AM

healthy, strong foundation. However, when children are exposed to ACEs and do not have a stable, nurturing adult in their lives to provide support, this can create toxic stress that damages the basic structures developing brains and leaves kids at risk for a lifetime of mental illness, substance use disorders, and chronic health problems like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer.

If we do not intervene now to prevent and mitigate the effects of ACEs, today's children will be more likely need support services later. In 2020, child maltreatment and neglect alone cost Texas an estimated \$1.75 billion in CPS expenditures, not including the additional cost associated with substance use and mental health treatment, incarceration, and domestic violence. By intervening now, we can reduce healthcare costs, improve economic productivity, reduce crime, and boost educational achievement.

Although it is possible to mend some of the damage of toxic stress later in life, it is less expensive and more effective to prevent ACEs and buffer children from their impact early, before these negative experiences create lasting harm to the brain. Protective factors, like healthy relationships with parents, access to community resources, and supportive school/home environments, can help children thrive despite adversity. To ensure children have these protective factors, entire communities must come together: child welfare service providers, early childhood programs, schools, health care systems, family support, social services providers, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, the intellectual and developmental disability community, businesses, philanthropies, and families. HB 3493 will convene these stakeholders and state agencies to assess current investments/strategies, define prevention needs and best practices, and make state investments as effective as possible.

We have the power to prevent ACEs and set the stage for a lifetime of healthy growth and development. TPS urges the committee to support HB 3493 and build a healthier future for Texas children.

Madeline McClure

TexProtects

Dallas, TX

The science underpinning Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) directly corresponding to poor adult health outcomes (such as cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes) was first shown in large scale longitudinal studies in the late 90's. Many states have capitalized on this breakthrough by taking qualitative information and creating quantitative data to help diagnose and treat youth with high ACE scores before these events translate to negative health behaviors and outcomes.

We know that providing opportunities early with youth and their families to set them on a trajectory of healthy behaviors results in better educational, mental health and economic outcomes. But we don't know how to prevent negative outcomes if we don't know which populations are effected.

HB 3493 by Rep. Parker provides an avenue to do just that: Access key ACE data to inform efficient use of community-based supports so that all of our children have a chance at a healthy start for a bright future for themselves and indeed, for the future of Texas.

Thank you,

Madeline McClure

214-770-7624

Brian Cummings

Self Retired

Allen, TX

As the father of two girls and grandfather of 3, I urge you to pass this bill to help all children be safer.

Jennifer Williams, PhD

Self, Executive Director of a nonprofit

Rosharon, TX

Please pass HB 3493. Children who have been impacted by ACES need our help and support. A compassionate society is one in which our youngest, our most vulnerable are protected and cared for - and one in which we help those who have been impacted by traumatic events. This is so important to our children and to our society as a whole.

Printed on: April 29, 2021 9:55 AM

