

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Delivery of Government Efficiency
For HB 5196

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Hearing Date: April 16, 2025 8:00 AM

Scott Delgado
myself
austin, TX

Teleworking has provided so much benefit to Texas. It has allowed us to retain high quality and technical employees due to the flexibility of telework and hybrid schedules. These talented employees will likely leave for the private sector without this benefit. Our agency is just now getting fully staffed, which we had issues with several years ago. The legislature should be supporting each of the agencies by letting them make this decision, not by having a blanket mandate from outside the agency's control. It was presented during the LBB how useful telework/hybrid schedules have been. Increased productivity, retaining talent despite lower pay, increased satisfaction with job. Not passing this bill would be harming all of the loyal Texas state employees for their years of service.

Katherine McGlaughlin
Self, Natural Resources Specialist
Pflugerville, TX

I am an employee at the TCEQ and strongly believe teleworking has been a massive boon for our agency. Our staff retention is far higher than it was when I started, and now our team is able to pull top talent from around the state, from our team's engineer in Denton to our sister program's staff in Kyle - two locations where in-office commuting is impractical. Please consider these comments when voting and bless -

Sammy Crawford
Self - small business owner
Silsbee, TX

Let's prioritize doing a good, efficient job instead of fixating on where the bodies are located. As a business owner constantly on the road, traveling between locations, I don't appreciate legislation that pushes more people onto the highways during peak hours. It directly interferes with those of us who rely on clear roads to keep our businesses running. The amount of traffic I already must deal with as a business owner is frustrating and having employees who have no reason to commute (because they can complete their job duties at home) on the roadways adds to the traffic causing unnecessary delays and reduces the efficiency of the very American business owners this administration is supposedly trying to promote.

I can accept road closures for necessary repairs—that's an investment in long-term improvements. But deliberately increasing traffic without a valid, lasting purpose only creates unnecessary congestion and safety risks. It's short-sighted and counterproductive. This creates unnecessary complications and a more dangerous environment for all of us who rely on clear roadways to conduct business efficiently. Not to mention the extra burden it places on law enforcement responding to accidents and other traffic related incidents instead of working on solving more violent crimes.

Jered Simpson
Self
Lumberton, TX

Safety should be a higher priority in considering having this many people return to the office and commute on the highways. State workers worked from home for over a year and a half during Covid with no reductions in efficiency or productivity. Roadways are congested and expansion projects cannot keep up with the growing population, resulting in constant construction and a dangerous environment where people are dying and first responders must risk their lives to respond to accidents. Administration should make use of the technology available in 2025 and keep non-essential workers at home in order to help relieve traffic and improve safety for these employees and the general public. Administration should consider how adding this many employees unnecessarily to rush hour traffic affects the efficiency of small business owners who must commute. Distractions in the office lead to much more reduced efficiency. How much money are state agencies spending on office space? How is it more efficient to waste this money when employees are more than capable of working from home with the same productivity? Quality of life is the only real benefit left to working for the state and forcing employees to return to the office creates dissatisfaction and hinders employee retention.

Laura Ethridge
Self
Austin, TX

The State of Texas received reports from state agencies that showed favorable results and cost savings due to positions that were able to 100% telework. I request as a taxpayer that the results are not ignored. Texas should not blindly follow the decisions being made at the federal level. President Trump just regained control and is dedicated to cleaning up the mess created by the previous administration. Our State has been in good hands with Governor Abbott and has not been mismanaged. Full time telework saves the State and taxpayers money on office space, supplies, and maintenance as well as serving as a retention benefit. High turnover in positions costs money to retrain for the job. Please preserve the talented individuals by allowing people to return to telework if their position does not interface with the public. State employees are paid less than their counterparts in the private sector and allowing telework is equivalent to increasing their pay through savings on gas, vehicle wear and tear, and child care costs. Lastly, please also consider, especially in large cities with heavy traffic the benefits of having thousands of state employees not commuting. It would benefit all. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback and serving Texas citizens!

Michael Belsick
Fredericksburg Tea Party
Fredericksburg, TX

I am AGAINST HB 5196 because I do not believe that "telework" is as productive as working in an office. How do we know that someone is actually working "full time"?

Julie Beaubien, Mrs.

Self, Public Involvement Team Lead

Round Rock, TX

Hello, my name is Julie Beaubien and I'm commenting as a private citizen. I'm honored to work for TxDOT for about 12 years (along with two years at ERS), and I beg members of the DOGE committee to reconsider their stance on removing all remote work options for State employees. State employees are simply asking for some level of flexibility:

- I will be paying nearly \$5,000 in tolls given difficult access to non-toll roads (taking I-35 – along with heavy construction coming - will be impossible and adds about *3* hours in traffic a day for me); it will cost me at least \$2,400 in gas and at least \$4,800 in food alone to bring five days of lunches to work
- This creates less time to care for my children, less time to help with homework, less time to fulfill my duties as a mother
- With my costs added up: This will be a \$12,200/year PAY CUT for me. That long overdue and very much appreciated raise you gave State employees? *GONE. Please understand telework decisions create real hardships for thousands of families.
- Consider the traffic: In the Austin area, higher traffic levels, and at the WORST time given the long construction ahead for SH 35

Are you aware that in the Austin area alone, that nearly 30% of all people fully telework? The new generation of workforce demands, and expects, to telework at least part time. My son, who wanted to follow his mother's footsteps into state employment and is finishing his masters degree in data analytics - no longer wants to pursue State employment. Let's consider the incentive to become a State employee: The retirement formula/standard changed negatively for new employees over the years. The State doesn't match your 401K. You're expected to pay more into your pension. No telework, at all. And the real kicker: You get paid 7-10% less than private employees (at least, according to online data and we all know this is a way higher percentage). We don't get hiring bonuses, our occasional, average merits are \$1,500 - \$3,000 *maybe each year, *BEFORE taxes. How will our workforce be attractive to younger generations? You will lose bright minds, sharp talent and emerging leaders because of an archaic belief that State employees abuse telework. I worked overtime, stayed up late working from home. I can't and won't do that now because of the cost, stress and hardship to my family based on the long commute times and cost. I am asking for reasonable telework accommodations and that you ALLOW the option of flexible hybrid solutions (telework and in-person) to offset these hardships. Please remember we were hybrid long before COVID. State employees are reasonable and we understand the benefit of in-office work, however, we would greatly appreciate even 1-2 days of telework ability. The savings from gas, tolls, commute times, daycare costs, and more would be huge for even just a few days.

Please provide at least SOME KIND OF FLEXIBILITY. Thank you very much. Respectfully, Julie Beaubien

Christina Ferrara

Self

Beaumont, TX

I believe that allowing state employees to telework would provide the much needed spending cuts the state needs. There is so much money spent on office space by the state that could be cut down using teleworking schedules and cube sharing. Telework also provides a more distraction free environment and allows employees to limit time wasted on commuting to an office. Many of the state regional offices do not have space for everyone to be in office anyway and would require more office space to be rented or built which would be wasting tax payer dollars on a nonissue instead of putting it towards the people and the economy.

Lisa Atkinson

Self-Project Manager

Cypress, TX

I am in favor of this legislation.

Morgan Kopcho

self

San Antonio, TX

Hello, I am writing in favor of HB 5196 regarding telework for state employees because the agencies should be able to decide what type of work environment best for their employees, not the governor that lives in a mansion across the street from his own office rather than a working class individual trying to find affordable housing on the other side of town. I am in favor of teleworking for the following reasons:

1. Office space is severely limited in many agencies. My region's office does not have enough room to fit everyone that works in San Antonio. I already share a cubicle with someone and we swap the days that we are in office versus teleworking. It is difficult to work productively when we have to make phone calls and focus and everyone else in the room is doing the same or causing other distractions.
2. Morale has been wrecked since the Governor's return to work announcement. Being in a cubicle packed like sardines is demoralizing, and driving two hours every day in traffic is . My agency is clearly suffering because employees don't stay long enough to be truly effective at their jobs. Most people in my team have been there less than two years and very few fully understand the work we are doing and are capable of higher level duties, which puts unnecessary burden on them as well.
3. More vehicles on the road contributes to worsening rush-hour traffic and pollution. Roughly 28 counties in Texas are nonattainment for ozone, which means that they do not meet standards to protect human health. Cars contribute to the ozone levels, and ozone in turn causes asthma and other respiratory health effects. By federal law, the state must get these counties into attainment, and forcing more cars to be on the road than are necessary is contrary to this goal.

I understand that teleworking is not always feasible for certain positions in the government. However, for other positions like mine, the work is completely online. I work with companies across the state, rarely in my own region. I do not need to be in the office at all, and I will probably not stay in my position if I have to be in a cubicle all the time.

Elizabeth Mikeska
self, citizens of Texas
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the DOGE Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Telework Bill HB5196. As you consider this legislation, I urge you to take into account the findings of the recently released November 2024 Legislative Budget Board Remote Work Report. This comprehensive report provides compelling evidence of the significant benefits of remote work policies for state agencies and, by extension, for the people of Texas.

The 2024 LBB report clearly demonstrates that agencies with established remote work policies have experienced overwhelmingly positive outcomes. Specifically, these policies have proven to be a critical factor in both recruiting and retaining qualified employees, a vital consideration in today's competitive job market. Furthermore, the report highlights the positive impact of remote work on employee productivity, indicating that flexible work arrangements can lead to increased efficiency and output.

Beyond these benefits, allowing telework will result in substantial cost savings for the state. Reduced office space requirements translate to lower real estate expenses, including rent, utilities, and maintenance. Additionally, decreased commuting leads to reduced wear and tear on state infrastructure, and potentially lowers the need for expansion of those infrastructures. The Return to Office order imposes unnecessary costs on Texans by requiring the state to maintain expensive office spaces that, according to the LBB report, are not essential for maintaining productivity.

By supporting HB5196, you have the opportunity to codify the positive impacts of remote work, as documented by the LBB. This bill will provide state agencies with the necessary flexibility to implement effective telework policies, ultimately benefiting both state employees and the taxpayers of Texas through significant cost savings. I urge you to consider the evidence presented in the 2024 LBB report and vote in favor of HB5196.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Krystina Sepulveda
Self, Enforcement Coordinator TCEQ
Alton, TX

To my fellow Texans who represent us the people, please reconsider allowing Texans to telework. Telework has been an amazing option for an alternate of being in an office where I am not needed. I personal work for a state agency where I commute an hour to an office twice out of the week. While in office, I have no responsibility to the office other than I am required to be in office. To live that life for the rest of my life, five days a week instead of two, the very thought brings sadness. I understand the concept of bringing state employees back into the office. I understand it is a privilege to work from home but why take a privilege away from those who have shown on a performance level that the work task to them is being completed, and goals are being met if not excelled. I truly feel by removing telework this will affect a lot of people not only mentally but financially as well. I've done the math, based on current gas prices; by having to go back into the office full time, I will increase my gas expense an additional \$2,500 dollars a year. Thats a lot of money that we are not being compensated for with the adjustment of our schedules. It's not about the money specifically, but about the principal that when Texans signed work contracts it was for a telework hybrid schedule. Respectfully, it is the duty of those representing us Texans to advocate for Texans and our work contracts be honored. I thank you in advance for all the hard work our Representatives due and God Bless Texas.