



Testimony

Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, Dignity, and Prosperity in Texas

Invited testimony submitted to the Texas House Committee on Appropriations–S/C on Article II

by Vance Ginn, PhD, Chief Economist

Chairman Capriglione and Members of the Committee:

My name is Vance Ginn, and I am chief economist at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the Foundation’s insights related to the Health and Human Services Commission in Article II. Given the [economic situation](#) with many unemployed Texans struggling from business closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions and following recent power outages, the Legislature should consider less spending, taxing, and regulating so Texans have more opportunities to prosper.

How Much Do Appropriations by Function Change in Article II?

Article II – Health & Human Services, All Funds (Millions)	Appropriated 2020-21	House Bill 1 2022-23	Change	Percent Change	Senate Bill 1 2022-23	Change	Percent Change
Dept of Family & Protective Services	\$4,429.3	\$4,388.3	-\$41.0	-0.9%	\$4,426.1	-\$3.2	-0.1%
Dept of State Health Services	\$1,676.2	\$1,818.1	\$141.9	8.5%	\$1,765.8	\$89.6	5.3%
Health & Human Services Commission	\$76,733.5	\$84,101.6	\$7,368.1	9.6%	\$83,843.9	\$7,110.4	9.3%
Subtotal, Health and Human Services	\$82,839.0	\$90,308.1	\$7,469.1	9.0%	\$90,035.7	\$7,196.7	8.7%
Employee Benefits and Debt Service	\$2,237.9	\$2,278.9	\$41.0	1.8%	\$2,264.1	\$26.2	1.2%
Less Interagency Contracts	\$773.1	\$676.2	-\$96.9	-12.5%	\$676.2	-\$96.9	-12.5%
Total, All Functions	\$84,303.8	\$91,910.8	\$7,607.0	9.0%	\$91,623.7	\$7,319.9	8.7%

Notes: Appropriations-to-appropriations are from the Legislative Budget Board at the links provided. The budget functions in yellow have growth rates higher than the 5% growth in population plus inflation over the prior 2 fiscal years.

Recommendations

- **Follow the Foundation’s Responsible Recovery Agenda** by passing a Conservative Texas Budget [below \\$248.6 billion](#)—based on a 5% increase in population growth plus inflation, which the Legislature’s proposed [base budgets do so far](#)—and providing [spending and tax relief](#) on [businesses](#) and [property](#), like [school M&O](#), to assist many struggling Texans with a more prosperous economy so they have opportunities to overcome their challenges.
- **Improve Texans’ Livelihoods** by assuring scarce taxpayer dollars directed to safety nets go only to those people for whom these programs are intended instead of to bureaucracy, other individuals, and other programs. And the programs should be simplified and restructured to help people permanently graduate off them. Examples include:
 - Simplifying the certification process of SNAP for recipients 60 years of age or older or disabled by reducing the amount of paperwork and frequency of reporting ([SB 224](#) Sen. Perry & Sen. West).
 - Requiring regular third-party efficiency audits of TANF within HHSC to identify roadblocks to success within the program, such as time spent on duplicative bureaucracy, safety net cliffs, block grant dollars going to other

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programs, and measures that increase dependence rather than promote self-sufficiency ([HB 1516](#) Rep. Parker & [SB 657](#) Sen. Springer).

- Conducting an independent study that reports the bureaucratic costs of running safety net programs and the benefits of streamlining them ([HB 1886](#) Rep. Noble & Sen. Hughes).
- **Do Not Expand Medicaid** because [coverage does not equal care](#) and it will [cost taxpayers more](#) in Texas and run up larger federal deficits that will weigh on our future prosperity. [Instead](#), we should find a way to provide quality, affordable healthcare to those who need it most through market-based reforms like [direct primary care](#).

I appreciate your work and look forward to helping improve Texans' health and livelihoods by expanding opportunities to increase self-sufficiency, dignity, and prosperity through pro-growth economic policy that reduces government barriers. ★

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vance Ginn, PhD, is chief economist at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute in Austin. He served as associate director for economic policy at the White House's Office of Management and Budget, taught at several universities, and earned his doctorate in economics from Texas Tech University.

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The public is demanding a different direction for their government, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation is providing the ideas that enable policymakers to chart that new course.

