



Increase staffing to improve services to the most vulnerable Texans

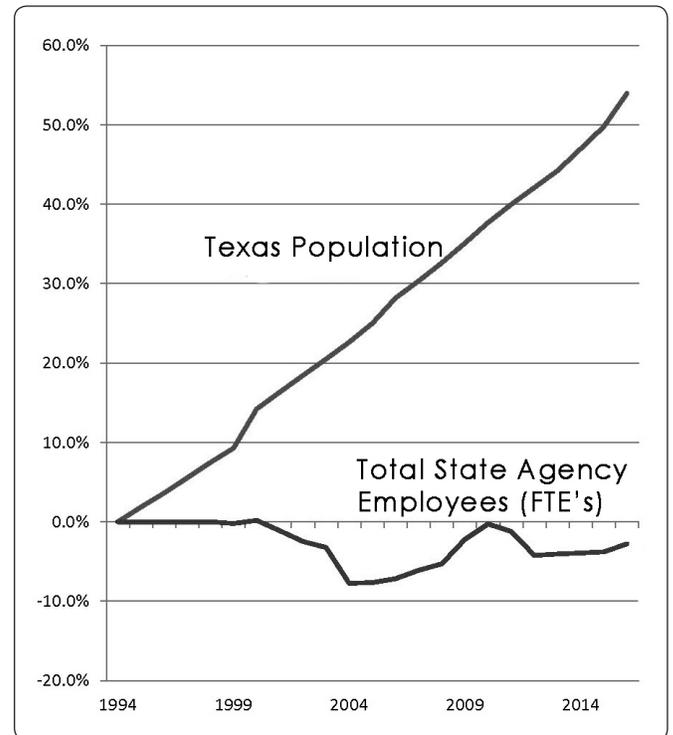
Over the last 22 years, the total number of state agency employees has decreased by 4% since while the state's overall population has increased by nearly 54%. A fast growing population has created a higher demand for state services in Texas. Over the years the Texas Legislature has not funded staffing levels to keep pace with population growth. From caring for the intellectually disabled to protecting abused children; adequate staffing is necessary to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. The decline in the state's workforce coupled with increasing population has also resulted in unmanageable caseloads for current employees and increasing turnover rates. Excessive workloads undermine the quality of state services delivered by multiple state agencies.

• Health Human Services Commission

The number of eligibility workers in HHS agencies has not kept pace with the increase in Texans applying for assistance. For example, over the last 10 years the number of Texans in the SNAP program has doubled, while the number of eligibility workers has not increased. This has caused workloads to reach unmanageable levels. In addition to that, the cancellation of the Maximus contract in 2014 added 256,535 new CHIP applications to state employee workloads. At least an additional 1500 staff are needed to bring workloads to a reasonable level.

• Department of Family Protective Services

The lives of children, the elderly, and the disabled who are at risk of abuse would be better protected with higher staffing levels. Unsafe caseload levels are a main reason why many staff quit DFPS. Lower caseloads improve retention rates and services to clients by directly improving assessments, outcomes, and allowing more time to interact with clients and families. DFPS administrators have proposed changes to policy and procedures to address this issue. While many of these changes and initiatives are needed, the fundamental problem remains- high caseloads lead to high turnover rates and lower quality services. Attempting to improve services without hiring more staff will not result in better outcomes for clients or higher retention rates.



• TDCJ – Parole Division

In the 80th Legislative Session, HB 3736 was passed to establish a standard caseload ratio of 60:1 for TDCJ Parole Officers. However, funding was never allocated to hire more officers in order to make the 60:1 caseload ratio a reality. The LBB calculates the average caseload for regular supervision is 79.6, but a large number of officers carry caseloads of 90, 100, sometimes 121 cases. There is a definite connection between caseload size, the effectiveness of parole officers and public safety.

• Texas Juvenile Justice Department

Increasing staff in TJJD will greatly improve the staff-to-youth ratio, creating a safer environment for both staff and the youth population. Insufficient staff within TJJD youth facilities has resulted in dangerous working condition for state employees. At 19.7%, TJJD has the highest rate of injury for any of the Texas state agencies. High injury rates plus high staff-to-youth ratios equals high turnover for Juvenile Correctional Officers which currently stands at 36.8%. To address this issue, the agency has requested an additional 212 front-line staff in these state facilities. Now it's up to the legislature to follow through and fund TJJD's request for more staff.