Interim Committee Charges for the Texas House of Representatives
Jan. 31, 2014

Full list of committee charges: http://www.house.state.tx.us/_media/pdf/interim-charges-83rd.pdf

House Committee on Public Education

1. Monitor the implementation of HB 5 (83R) and report on recommendations for improvement. Work with the Texas Education Agency, the State Board of Education, and public and higher education stakeholders to ensure the creation of additional rigorous mathematics and science courses needed to address the current and projected needs of the state's workforce.

2. Explore innovative, research-based options for improving student achievement beyond standardized test scores. Evaluate standards for effective campus management as well as teacher preparation, certification, and training. Review current teacher evaluation tools and instructional methods, such as project-based learning, and recommend any improvements that would promote improved student achievement. Engage stakeholders on how to recruit and retain more of our "best and brightest" into the teaching profession.

3. Solicit input from leading authorities on the traits and characteristics of good governance, effective checks and balances between the board and administration and the effective relationship between a board and the superintendent. Review current oversight authority by the Texas Education Agency over school board policies on governance. Make recommendations on trustee training, potential sanctions, and means of grievances, as well as recommendations on whether the role of trustee or superintendent needs to be more clearly defined.

4. Review successful strategies and methods that have improved student achievement at chronically underperforming schools. Identify alternatives that could be offered to current students who are attending these schools and determine how to turn these schools around. Identify the benefits and concerns with alternative governance of underperforming schools.

5. Review the broad scope and breadth of the current TEKS in the tested grades, including the format, testing calendar, and the limitation on instructional days available. Recommend options to streamline the assessment of TEKS and focus on core concepts. Review current federal testing requirements in grades 3-8 to determine if testing relief is possible.
6. Examine the role of the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) in serving school districts. Review the programs and services of HCDE, specifically the department’s ability to assist school districts to operate more efficiently. Report any costs or savings the HCDE provides districts and taxpayers. Make recommendations to improve the operation of the HCDE.

7. Review the state regulatory and administrative systems related to public school bond issuances. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Investments and Financial Services)

8. Study the impact of SB 393 (83R) and SB 1114 (83R). Assess the impact of school discipline and school-based policing on referrals to the municipal, justice, and juvenile courts, and identify judicial policies or initiatives designed to reduce referrals without having a negative impact on school safety. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Corrections)

9. Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee’s jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 83rd Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should:

   a. consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens;

   b. identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate;

   c. determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner; and

   d. identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs.

House Committee on Appropriations

1. Monitor the performance of state agencies and institutions, including operating budgets, plans to carry out legislative initiatives and planned budget reductions, caseload projections, performance measure attainment, implementation of all rider provisions, and any other matter affecting the fiscal condition of the agencies and the state.

2. Examine progress made during the 83rd legislative session on reducing the reliance on dedicated accounts for budget certification. Recommend additional methods to further reduce the reliance on dedicated accounts for budget certification purposes, and further examine ways to maximize the use of such accounts.
3. Monitor the administration of the Correctional Managed Health Care system and examine forecasts for short and long-term criminal justice populations and health care cost trends. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Corrections)*

4. Examine exempt compensation salary levels for senior and executive management personnel, as well as the use of non-state funds to provide salary supplements.

5. Examine short and long-term deferred maintenance costs for state facilities and approaches to deal with these costs in light of limited remaining General Obligation bond authority.

6. Examine the status of the state’s information technology (IT) infrastructure, the effectiveness of data center consolidation in reducing IT costs, and the effectiveness of the Department of Information Resources's Cooperative Contracts Program in delivering best value for the state in IT purchases.

7. Monitor the implementation of cost-containment initiatives in health and human services programs directed by Health and Human Services Commission Rider 51. Recommend additional opportunities for cost containment, including but not limited to, improvements in the procurement of durable medical equipment and increased medication adherence among Medicaid clients.

8. Monitor the administration of new state funding to expand behavioral health services in Texas. Make recommendations to improve coordination and prevent duplication of effort, including the behavioral health projects funded through the Medicaid 1115 waiver. Evaluate the methodology utilized by the state to fund the public mental health system in order to assess improvements in how mental health funds and associated performance targets are allocated throughout the state. Develop funding recommendations that emphasize equity in funding and performance expectations, improving outcomes, the attainment of performance targets, population needs, availability of local resources, and geographic diversity.

9. Study the implementation of provisions in SB 7 (83R) and Article II Special Provisions Section 48 regarding the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). Make recommendations for expansion of, and improvement in, the delivery of those services if cost-effective.

10. Conduct a basic review of current public education and higher education funding formulas. Specifically, focus on whether items funded outside base formulas (Foundation School Program (FSP) and higher education formulas) should be included inside the formulas. After the review, the committee may recommend the addition or deletion of funding items or changes in levels of current funding.
11. Review existing research funds; evaluate the purpose for their creation and the progress made toward the goal of each fund. Recommend any changes necessary to improve the effectiveness or outcomes of each program's stated purpose. Determine to what extent eligibility overlap exists among the funds. Make recommendations on eligibility and funding levels for each fund.

12. Review current capital needs in higher education. The committees shall examine past methods of financing higher education's capital needs, as well as approaches used in other states. The committees shall jointly make recommendations to address these costs in the future. In adopting recommendations, the committees should focus on methodologies that identify priority capital projects, treat institutions of higher education equitably, and uniformly share costs between the state and institutions. The committees should also examine the viability of alternatives to traditional models for funding capital projects. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Higher Education)*

13. Monitor the use of funds provided or made available to Texas in relation to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and make recommendations on the appropriate use of these funds in the future. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Natural Resources)*

14. Examine the immediate and long-term fiscal impact of the Employees Retirement System (ERS) employee health care plan. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Pensions)*

15. Study the affordability of health care for active public school employees. Examine how premiums and out-of-pocket costs have increased over time and how these increases have affected employees and school districts, and make appropriate recommendations. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Pensions)*

16. Examine the immediate and long-term fiscal impact of the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) health care plan (TRS-Care). *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Pensions)*

**House Committee on Pensions**

1. Examine the immediate and long-term fiscal impact of the Employees Retirement System (ERS) employee health care plan. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Appropriations)*

2. Study the affordability of health care for active public school employees. Examine how premiums and out-of-pocket costs have increased over time and how these increases have affected employees and school districts, and make
appropriate recommendations. *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Appropriations)*

3. Examine the immediate and long-term fiscal impact of the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) health care plan (TRS-Care). *(Joint charge with the House Committee on Appropriations)*

4. Examine the new reporting requirements proposed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

5. Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee’s jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 83rd Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should:
   
a. consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens;
   
b. identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate;
   
c. determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner; and
   
d. identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs.