

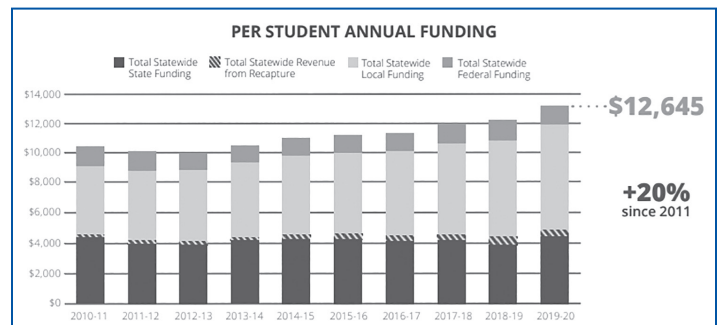


Investing in Our Future

Funding for our Public Schools and Universities in South Texas

Following a 2019 legislative session that produced major school finance reforms for Texas, the 87th Legislature ensured continuation of all public education reform measures created in HB 3 by including an increase of \$3.1 billion in the state budget for public schools, fully covering the cost of enrollment growth over the next two years. Coming into this session, there was concern that the pandemic and the declines in tax revenues would require these investments to be scaled back. However, we kept our promise of not only fully funding public education, protecting the salary increases to our teachers and school employees, but also added additional funds. Included in the state's overall \$248 billion budget is \$464 million to fund "HB 3 clean up" legislation (HB 1525), \$60 million for supplemental special education services, and \$664 million for targeted programs to help students and schools affected by the pandemic.

The budget also continues our investments in higher education. The Legislature added \$486 million to higher education to bring our total investment to \$8.6 billion, \$1.25 billion of which is for financial aid programs. The state budget provided over \$145 million in funding



million for the Cervical Dysplasia Cancer Immunology Center and will continue working with UTRGV and UT System leadership to expand cancer care in South Texas. Education is the best equalizer and these investments will continue helping our students get an education.

Improving Mental Health in Our Public Schools

Mental health in our public schools continues to be a priority for the Legislature. The isolation and social distancing measures put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic caused students to have less access to their peers and important supportive networks. As a result, suicidal thoughts and attempt rates reportedly increased. During the 87th Regular Session, I passed Senate Bill 279 which will streamline access to mental health support services to students by requiring all student identification cards issued by a public school to a student in grade six or higher include contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Lifeline. Suicide prevention hotline and/or text line numbers should be printed on student ID cards because students typically have them on their persons, while students may otherwise see this information only sporadically or after searching online. Providing a readily accessible telephone number to a suicide prevention hotline on a student's ID cards will be another necessary resource for potential lifesaving help.

The Legislature also approved a budget that strengthens our commitment by including \$8.4 billion in behavioral health funding across 25 state agencies. This includes an increase of almost \$20 million for the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium which will now be funded at nearly \$120 million to provide early intervention for students at risk of suicide, substance abuse, or becoming a danger to themselves or others. Additionally, the Legislature appropriated an additional \$113 million during the 3rd special session to expand these mental health treatment options. Since its creation, The Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium has received over \$330 million in funding, ensuring mental health care access for more children.

Capital Construction Assistance Projects

Authorized in SB 52
(87th, 3rd Special Session)
- co authored by Senator Hinojosa

- **\$44.9 million to Texas A&M Corpus Christi for construction of an arts and media building.**
- **\$44.9 million to UTRGV for construction of a health affairs building.**
- **\$30 million to Texas A&M Health Science Center for construction of a nursing education and research center in McAllen.**

for Texas A&M Corpus Christi, over \$2 million of which supports the growing engineering programs we recently created. Moreover, the budget increased funding for Del Mar Community College by nearly \$2 million, provided \$8.5 million to the UT Marine Science Institute, and added \$3 million to create the Texas A&M Corpus Christi Unmanned Aircraft Emergency Management program. A total of \$364.3 million was appropriated for UTRGV, which includes \$72.8 million for the School of Medicine. We also allocated \$1.9

Workforce Development through Higher Education

The future of our state depends on a healthy, educated, and prepared workforce to meet evolving market demands. We must continue to invest in programs that meet current workforce needs but also help identify, develop, and train workers for the economy of the future. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, millions of Texans filed for unemployment, while the mismatch between workforce needs and skilled workers deepened.

With this in mind, I was proud to co-author Senate Bill 1102, which establishes the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Program to help put Texans back to work in high-demand occupations following the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant program is designed to accelerate workforce development and coordination between the state's employers and community and technical colleges to provide training programs and credentials for underemployed workers. The COVID-19 pandemic transformed much of the job market, and the TRUE Program will help affected workers in the service and other sectors access affordable training and acquire valuable skills. This initiative would build on our prior efforts to ensure that Texas has the well-educated and well-trained workforce it needs to stay competitive and continue growing our economy. Reskilling and upskilling Texans is critical to attaining the state's higher education goals and boosting the economy.



Senator Hinojosa with Dr. Mark Escamilla, President and CEO of Del Mar College.

13th Check to Retired Educators of TRS Issued in January 2022

Back in August during the 2nd Called Session of the 87th Legislature, I was proud to co-author Senate Bill 7 ("SB 7"), which boosted the retirement benefits for retired teachers and other retired school personnel of the Teacher Retirement



Senator Hinojosa joined by retired teachers from Senate District 20.

System of Texas ("TRS") by providing a "13th check" of up to \$2,400. This one-time supplemental payment will help retired educators, most of whom do not receive Social Security, pay their bills. This is the second 13th check the Legislature has approved in three years for most TRS retirees and represents a significant boost to their benefits. The Legislature approved the use of general revenue to fund the \$700 million cost of the 13th check, which will preserve the TRS pension fund allowing it to grow and become actuarially stronger.

On September 17, 2021, just a week after SB 7 became law, TRS adopted a resolution directing TRS staff to prepare and issue the 13th check. TRS members who retired on or before Dec. 31, 2020 or beneficiaries of a retiree who died on or before Dec. 31, 2020 and met the criteria of the legislation, including being eligible to receive their annuity payment the month before TRS issues the one-time supplemental payment, received the one-time supplemental payment capped at \$2,400 in January 2022.

87TH LEGISLATURE - SENATOR HINOJOSA SD 20 FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

DESCRIPTION	FUNDING FOR 2022-23
UTRGV General Academics	\$291,551,496
UTRGV School of Medicine	\$72,773,198
Texas A&M Corpus Christi	\$130,899,679
Texas A&M Corpus Christi - Unmanned Aircraft Emergency Management	\$3,000,000
Del Mar Community College	\$34,718,213
South Texas College	\$80,188,068
GME expansion	\$199,050,000
Food Banks	\$95,000,000
Healthy South Texas - Headquartered in Corpus Christi	\$8,572,800
Upgraded Level 1 Trauma Laboratories in Hidalgo County and construction of new laboratory in Starr County	\$16,700,000
Cervical Dysplasia Cancer Immunology Center	1,900,000
Quinta Mazatlan - Center for Urban Ecology	\$3,500,000
Texas State Aquarium - Wildlife Rescue Center	\$3,500,000
Regional Drainage and Water Assistance - Raymondville Drain	up to \$10,000,000
Border Security Operations - Border Prosecution Grants and funding for Anti Gang Centers	\$15,126,000
Border Infrastructure	\$60,000,000
Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance (DEAAG) Grants	\$30,000,000
Grants to Border Zone Fire Departments	\$1,000,000
Texas Transnational Intelligence Center in McAllen	\$500,000
South Texas International Airport in Edinburg - To expand an airport hangar for emergency and first responders.	\$5,000,000
Port Access Improvements	\$40,000,000
Trade Agricultural Inspection Grant Program	\$500,000

Improving Health Care Services

Healthy South Texas

Healthy South Texas, headquartered in Corpus Christi, was launched in September 2015 in 27 counties across South Texas. This program is focused on reducing the highest impact diseases in our region, such as diabetes, asthma, and other infectious diseases. Sadly, rising obesity, emerging infectious diseases, high uninsured rates, and limited access to health care all contribute to a less-than-desirable quality of life for many South Texans. Healthy South Texas extends solutions to meet underserved health needs in these communities.

I was proud to help get the funding for this pilot program in the budget and was encouraged to see our budget maintain its commitment to Healthy South Texas. Over the next two years, the state will invest over \$8.5 million to further the positive results of this program. As a result, families will get to enjoy healthier, longer lives for generations to come.



Senator Hinojosa participating in the groundbreaking ceremony for Driscoll Children's Hospital Rio Grande Valley which is expected to open in late 2022.

\$3.54 million in GME Expansion Grant funding to support a total of 48 positions and Doctors Hospital at Renaissance and the UTRGV School of Medicine have been awarded more than \$48 million in GME grants, significantly increasing the number of doctors in South Texas.

The State's First School of Podiatry

GME funding becomes increasingly important as UTRGV prepares to establish the first School of Podiatry and first Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM) degree program in Texas. The school has already received approval from the University of Texas System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The school received approval from the national accrediting body, the Council on Podiatric Medical Education (CPME) and began enrolling students for its Fall 2022 inaugural class. The graduates of this new school will need to complete residencies in podiatric medicine to be licensed to practice within their profession. To help with the recruitment of students, I sponsored House Bill 2509 to expand the GME Expansion Program thereby allowing medical schools and teaching hospitals with nationally accredited DPM degree programs to qualify for GME funding to support first-year residency slots. Texas needs to increase the supply of podiatric physicians to keep up with population growth and the demand for foot-related services created by aging, diabetes, and obesity. With this legislation, UTRGV educated podiatrists will not have to leave Texas upon graduation to complete their residencies.



Children participating in the McAllen Kids Marathon hosted by Healthy South Texas.

Women's Health

All Texans should have easy and affordable access to health care. Sadly, this has not been the case for many parts of Texas and for many groups of Texans. One area where the state has fallen short has been in the area of women's health. We learned about the high levels of mortality for women following child birth after a task force was created to investigate this alarming trend.

One recommendation from the task force was to extend Medicaid coverage to women from the current two months post partum to a full year. While I would have liked to have seen the state invest in serving these mothers for a full year, it was encouraging to see the state take a meaningful step in the right direction by extending coverage to six months post partum. With this change, moms and their children will experience better outcomes in this critical period of life.

State Funding for Medical Residencies

Additionally, the state budget bolsters our healthcare workforce by providing an additional \$48.6 million for the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Expansion Program, bringing the total funding for GME to \$199 million. This increase provides the funding needed to maintain the required 1.1 to 1 ratio of first-year residency positions to medical school graduates and helps fund doctor residency slots across the state. Since 2014, CHRISTUS Spohn in Corpus Christi has received



The Inaugural Class of 2020 from the UTRGV School of Medicine.

RGV Level 1 Trauma

Healthcare in the Rio Grande Valley took a monumental step forward when Doctors Hospital at Renaissance (DHR) received Level 1 trauma status - a first for South Texas. With this advancement, patients will no longer require travel outside of the Rio Grande Valley to receive highly specialized surgical care for serious injuries. Our community will be able to obtain complete, comprehensive care, for every aspect of an injury – from prevention to rehabilitation.

Moreover, this designation reaffirms the position DHR Health has taken as an academic healthcare leader in the Rio Grande Valley through its training program that con-

tinues to actively conduct research on trauma. As leaders in academic healthcare in the Rio Grande Valley and with the establishment of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and the UTRGV School of Medicine, DHR Health has become the primary teaching site for residency training programs. DHR Health is home to nine residency and fellowship training programs, including general surgery. As an American College of Surgeons (ACS) verified Level 1 Trauma Center, DHR Health provides these residents with the experience of working with severe trauma cases and prepares them to become future staff at trauma centers across our region and the country.



The designation of Doctors Hospital at Renaissance (DHR) in Edinburg as the first Level 1 trauma facility in the Rio Grande Valley. The Valley delegation made it one of its priorities during the 2019 legislative session to help provide funding for a Level 1 trauma facility in the RGV. In 2019, DHR was the recipient of \$6 million in grants funds to be used for leveling up to a Level 1 facility.

Supporting Economic Growth Through Infrastructure Investments



Senator Hinojosa, joined by Bruce Bugg, Jr., Chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission, and others for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Pharr Interchange Replacement Project.

Transportation

Transportation is the lifeblood of our economy. Texas continues to grow and so does the need for investments in our transportation infrastructure. These state investments create jobs, strengthen our economy, and advance our transportation infrastructure for future growth. I am pleased that due to the voter approved constitutional amendments (Prop 1 and Prop 7), during the 2021 session, the Texas Legislature was able to appropriate more than \$26.1 billion to TxDOT for project development and delivery as well as contracted and routine public roadway maintenance. Below is a sample of major transportation projects that are currently underway or planned across Senate District 20.

Key Projects Underway or Planned in SD 20

Brooks:

- US 281 Interstate Upgrade - \$90 million

Hidalgo:

- Pharr Interchange Project - \$303 million

- SH 365 - \$255 million
- US 83 La Joya/Penitas Relief Route - \$190 Million
- US 281 Interstate Upgrade - \$120 million

Jim Wells:

- US 281 Interstate Upgrade/relief route in Premont - \$74.6 million
- US 281 Upgrade Alice relief route to interstate standards - \$115 million

Nueces:

- Harbor Bridge Replacement Project - \$1 billion
- SH 358 (SPID) Eastbound ramp reversal in Corpus Christi - \$50.7 million

Broadband

For many Texans across the state, access to reliable and affordable internet services can be hard (and sometimes impossible) to come by. In fact, a 2019 study by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance found that four of the five least-connected U.S. cities can be found in Texas, three of which are in the Rio Grande Valley. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear the critical importance of accessible broadband as schools and businesses began operating remotely and health care providers increasingly utilized telehealth services.

This past session, Governor Abbott declared broadband access an emergency priority and the Legislature passed multiple measures that tackle the issue. House Bill 5 established a State Broadband Office that is tasked with creating a Broadband Development Map and a Broadband Development Program. This program will award various grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to support sustainable broadband infrastructure and expand broadband access to all corners of the state. Another piece of legislation, Senate Bill 507, lifts unnecessary burdens to broadband-only providers by granting them access to state highway right-of-ways so they can more easily build and maintain broadband infrastructure. This coordinated approach is an incredibly important step towards closing the digital divide in Texas.

A Personal Note from the Senator

Dear Friends,

While the 87th Legislature and its subsequent special sessions were not without their challenges, I am proud of all that was accomplished for Senate District 20, much of it due to the effective leadership and cooperation of the South Texas delegation.

As we went into the 87th legislative session, my colleagues and I were focused on addressing a projected multi-billion dollar shortfall in our budget, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the serious gaps in the management of our electricity grid during Winter Storm Uri. Inside this newsletter, you will find updates on these issues and others affecting Texans, as well as information about the measures we took to address them.

As we look ahead to next session, I welcome your input as we begin to prepare our next legislative agenda. I am honored to be a

part of the important budget writing process as Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and I look forward to crafting a well-balanced budget that protects the social and economic security of our families and balances those needs and interests with those of our great state.

Thank you for entrusting me with the honor of serving the constituents of Senate District 20. As always, my staff and I stand ready to answer your questions or assist you, so please do not hesitate to call or write me or come by any of my offices in the district or in Austin.

Semper Fi,



Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
State Senator, District 20



Property Tax Relief

Property tax reform was a top priority for the Texas Legislature both in 2019 and 2021. Rising property taxes are something we all feel on an annual basis. These taxes have continued a painful increase for too long and our families are burdened with paying a property tax bill that sometimes feels like a second mortgage. While appraisals sky-rocketed across the state, due to legislation passed in 2019, and the recently approved constitutional amendments, tax bill growth will not be as much.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed HB 3, which made historic investments in public education and cut school district taxes, which are the largest portion of Texans' tax bills. Under this bill, school district tax rates will shrink over time to offset growing property values. Similarly, we passed SB 2, which limits cities and counties from raising their tax revenues by more than 3.5% (down from 8%) without receiving voter approval.

This past session, we passed multiple bills that I co-authored to lower property taxes. Two of these bills, SB 1 and SB 12 authorized an election for two constitutional amendments that were both overwhelmingly approved by Texas voters in May of 2022.

Proposition 1, allows for school property taxes to decrease year after year for homeowners who are disabled or 65 or older. This fixes an oversight from 2019 legislation that

reduced property taxes but excluded these homeowners from this reduction because their tax rates were frozen.

Current law puts a ceiling in place for these taxpayers, and their school property taxes cannot rise above that for as long as they are in their home. However, the ceiling for these homeowners cannot be adjusted downward either. **Proposition 1** fixes this error by adjusting the ceiling downward to reflect the new ceiling at the lower amount anytime tax rates are lowered.

Proposition 2, makes a serious down payment on decreasing property taxes for all homeowners by increasing the homestead exemption from \$25,000 to \$40,000. This follows an increase in the homestead exemption, which I also co-authored and the voters approved in 2015, from \$15,000 to \$25,000. Just like in 2015, this increase in the homestead exemption will lower the amount of your home's value subject to school taxes - the largest share of property tax bills.

Proposition 2 will save Texans over \$350 million in 2023; a number which will only increase in subsequent years. These savings will be made up by the state and have zero effect on the funding for our schools.

Finally, we passed SB 8 which allows for new homeowners to claim a homestead exemption (and thereby a discount on their taxes) in the year they purchased the home, instead of having to wait for it to apply the following year.



contact

ESTAMOS EN CONTACTO

AUSTIN

P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711
Fax: (512) 463-0229
(512) 463-0120

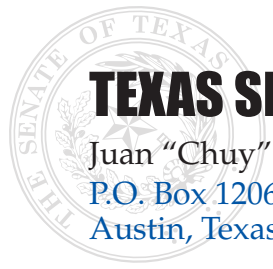
EDINBURG

1508 S. Lone Star Way
Suite 6A
Edinburg, Texas 78539
Fax: (956) 664-0602
(956) 318-0725

CORPUS CHRISTI

602 N. Staples St.
Suite 200
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401
Fax: (361) 882-0902
(361) 882-0900

<http://www.senate.texas.gov>
juan.hinojosa@senate.texas.gov



TEXAS SENATOR

Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 2468
AUSTIN, TEXAS

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.

Semper Fidelis

JUAN "CHUY" HINOJOSA

TEXAS SENATOR



update

CAPITOL

SUMMER 2022