



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE 86TH SESSION



WHY BOTHER?

- We just finished the first special session of the 85th Legislature.
- The 86th Legislature's regular session is set to begin in 2019.
- However, the work that will take place between now and then will shape the 86th.
- Interim charges will provide a roadmap for top priorities of leadership.
- Interim hearings give advocates insight into where legislators stand, and a way to participate.



INTERIM CHARGES

- The Lite Guv and Speaker assign specific study questions and issues to each committee.
- These directives are known as interim charges.
- Last interim, Speaker Straus released his 65 pages of interim charges in November.
- Last time, Gov. Patrick released his interim charges in five installments over one week.
- Lite Guv and Speaker also can call Select Committees, which study specific issues beyond the scope of standing committees.



INTERIM HEARINGS

- The charges are homework assignments, and committees hold hearings to study the charges.
- Notices that show which issues will be covered at a hearing are posted in advance.
- Committees invite experts to testify, and the public usually may testify.
- People may also submit written testimony, which can be helpful in addressing complex material.
- Committees make findings and produce interim reports based on what happens during hearings.



BUDGET DURING THE INTERIM

- If you wait till the regular session gavels in to make a budget ask, you're probably too late.
- Jan.-Mar. off-year: Statewide goals established.
- Apr.-May off-year: Budget instructions issued.
- July off-year: Budget requests due.
- Aug. off-year: Budget hearings begin.
- Oct.-Dec. off-year: Budget/policy recommendations developed.
- Jan. legislative year: Budget/policy recommendations submitted to legislature; session begins; Finance/Appropriations hold daily hearings to mark up budget.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ADVOCATE?

- Meet with your local delegation.
 - Each location of your organization is a constituent to someone.
 - Your organization may also serve constituents of different elected officials within the delegation.
- Send letters to Lite Guv and Speaker to recommend issues for interim charges.
- Attend interim hearings and provide testimony.
- Watch Internet streams of interim hearings.
- Promote advocacy activity on social media.



WHY BOTHER? PART II

- Done right, advocacy is an ongoing process because the legislative process also is ongoing.
- Your wish list should be connected to your organization's needs and operations.
- No one knows your organization's needs better than you, so you need to use that knowledge to explain why you are focused on a given issue.
- Don't take for granted that someone else will advocate for you. (MHA of Texas just closed.)
- Elected officials need to hear from constituents.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AREAS OF INTEREST

- **School-based mental health** was the only large Select Committee priority that didn't get done.
 - HB 11 (Price) and HB 2864 (Moody) could return in some form.
 - Better training, access to BH care in schools needed.
- **Integrated care:** Outside of care coordination, integration largely fell short, but PC/BH and MH/SUD integration remains a priority.
- **Justice-focused resources**, including grants to access technology that improves interactions between police and individuals with mental illness, are needed.