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.
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.
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.