



***Jewish Communities Day at the State: Legislative Mission to Austin***

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) organizes an advocacy day at the Texas Capitol for Jewish communities throughout Texas. As the only full-time JCRC in the state of Texas, the Dallas JCRC coordinates all the scheduling, materials and content. In 2017, more than 150 participants from throughout the state, including every Jewish Federation in Texas participated: Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth & Tarrant County, Austin, El Paso and of course Dallas. We also had participation from UT Hillel, UT Chabad and American Jewish Committee.

The JCRC arranges appointments for small (2 – 4 person) groups of our attendees to meet individually with legislators or staff during the afternoon. We also arrange “meet and greets” and photos with the Governor, Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the House.

**Our advocacy issues in 2019 will include:**

**1. Support for Israel**

Last year, participants of the JCRC’s Jewish Communities Day at the State successfully advocated for support for the Texas Anti-BDS Bill. This was the first bill passed by the state legislature in 2017 and is the strongest anti-BDS bill in the country. In the prior legislative mission to Austin, in 2015, we successfully promoted legislation that reaffirmed Texas’ strong support of Israel, and highlighted the strategic relationship between Texas and the State of Israel through economic trade, diplomacy and national security. Though not yet confirmed for 2019, we will certainly promote a pro-Israel resolution or legislation.

**2. Support for local social services agencies**

Social services provide vital benefits to Texans. They benefit the most vulnerable citizens of our communities. In Austin, we will support and advocate for issues important to Jewish Family Service (JFS), The Legacy Senior Communities, Community Homes for Adults, Inc. (CHAI), and the Jewish Community Center (JCC). One particular advocacy issue of JFS includes support for funding of Clubhouse Texas, which provides a community and meaningful work for people with mental illness.

**3. Access to quality early learning for all children**

We believe that Texas must provide and sustain adequate funding for high-quality early learning in public schools for all children. The JCRC is working with a coalition of multiple organizations, agencies, and stakeholders who are advocating for school finance reform. Statistically, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. We support high-quality early learning to ensure students are reading on grade level by 3rd grade.