

Welcome

Christopher Browne, Healthy Living Matters (HLM) Executive Committee Chair greeted members at the Fall 2016 Collaborative Meeting. He presented a brief overview of the meeting's theme: "Advocacy and the 2017 Legislative Session," primarily focusing on the importance of effective advocacy and communication to legislators. HLM has addressed a range of policy issues by disrupting the status quo. HLM is a forward thinking platform that informs and supports public health practice by using HLM events to advance systems level change.

He then recognized and thanked the executive committee, special guest speakers, and city/ county agencies and elected official representatives for their continued support and relentless efforts to make Houston/Harris County a healthier place to live.



"We need to ask ourselves, 'How can I get involved? How can I be an advocate? What should I advocate for? What does that look like in the real world?'"

Christopher Browne
HLM Executive Committee Chair

Introduction of New Staff and Sector Updates

Rocaille Roberts, Director of the Office of Policy and Planning, and Gwen Sims, Director of Nutrition and Chronic Disease Prevention at Harris County Public Health introduced the new HLM project staff:

- Frances Nguyen, Project Coordinator
- Mark Solano, Engagement Specialist
- Julie Jerden, Communication Consultant
- Lisa Lauter, School Health Consultant

Frances Nguyen announced that the sector updates will be shared with the group via a one-page document in the interest of time. The sector updates can be found at the end of these highlights.

Key Note Speaker

Senator Rodney Ellis, District 13, Texas State Senate

Senator Rodney Ellis challenged HLM members to create an impact in the community by designing and communicating their advocacy message using new approaches. Nutrition has drastically evolved over the years; avoiding unhealthy diet and maintaining an active lifestyle mitigate chronic diseases. Even though early childhood nutrition affects the growth and development of a child, high sugar products are sold and advertised to the nation's most vulnerable population – children.

Overall, adults play a vital role and influence their children's food preferences or eating behaviors. Parents should be encouraged to structure their children's diet and eating habits at an early stage. Motivating and educating parents to buy healthier food options is key.

Senator Ellis stressed the importance of timing during advocacy campaigns and devising strategies to propel impact. Social media is an effective tool to amplify advocacy efforts and spur dialogue about social issues. In his new role as Harris County Commissioner, he plans is interested in on transforming the bayous into green spaces, expanding parks and trails and incorporating fitness equipment for the bayous.



"We have to change attitudes. Here is the theory: when we build more roads, we do not end up helping congestion for a simple reason. The more roads we have to get to places, the more places we have to go. We have to make communities where we can walk."

Senator Rodney Ellis
Keynote Speaker

Presentations

Shelby Massey, Texas Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

"The American Heart Association & Health Food Financing Legislation"

Shelby noted the importance of the healthy food financing initiative and provided a brief overview of the America Heart Association's (AHA) future directions related to childhood obesity. Obesity is a prevalent issue nationwide. Texas is now the 10th most obese state in the nation and almost a third of Texas children are overweight or obese.

AHA is focused on childhood obesity and ensuring that food desert communities have access to healthy foods. The aim is to help low-income families make healthier diet and lifestyle choices. Chronic diseases disproportionately affect low-income and minority populations that live in underserved communities. Food

store owners in low-income communities face significant barriers to development. A perfect example of an underserved food desert would be a community that has many restaurants, however; they are only fast food restaurants and convenience stores instead of grocery stores. The costs are too high to tackle independently due to higher interest loans and few favorable financing options. Therefore, access to nutritious food is restricted or non-existent.

There are several innovative solutions to solve the food desert crisis in Texas. Shelby discussed one aspect: The Healthy Food Financing Initiative. This important initiative incentivizes both traditional and non-traditional grocery stores to increase access to affordable, healthy food in food desert communities (and aligns with HLM Policy Priority E2). The state of Texas will implement this initiative by arranging a few



"What we find is that in a lot of these communities, there may be the ability for the community to support a food retail outlet but maybe not the capacity to create one because of barriers to entry."

*Shelby Massey
Presenter*

public funds to provide grants or low-cost loans.

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session, AHA advocated for the Texas Grocery Access Investment Act. The bill passed the second and third reading; however, failed to pass due to voter verification. The organization intends to work on a similar bill in the next legislative session. Moreover, they are building a strong, diverse coalition of stakeholders to increase dialogue around food access to help build healthier communities.

To learn more about the initiative, you can choose from one or more of the following:

- 1) Join the Texas Grocery Access Task Force
- 2) Share American Heart Association's information with decision makers and stakeholders
- 3) Write a letter of support for the policy to elected officials
- 4) If you have any concerns or questions, please contact Shelby Massey via e-mail at Shelby.Massey@heart.org



Joel Romo, Texana Public Affairs

"FitnessGram & The Cooper Institute /Partnership for a Healthy Texas 85th Session Legislative Agenda"

Joel briefly shared some insight on Dr. Kenneth Cooper, founder of Cooper Institute. Dr. Cooper conceived the term 'aerobics' as well as the genius behind walking events for a cause. Many charity and fitness events are hosted across the nation yearly. Over time, the nation caught a wave of the 'walking for a cause' idea, and since its inception, it has been replicated for community-driven events nationwide.

Overall, the economic costs of obesity subsequently increase medical claims and healthcare costs. A healthy workforce has a substantial impact on morale, work-life balance and minimizes long-term illness. The Department of Defense spends \$1.1 billion on treating obesity-related illnesses for service members and their families.

The Cooper Institute is advocating for an innovative fitness tool – FitnessGram. FitnessGram is the national fitness assessment tool administered in schools to improve physical education. The powerful fitness assessment is associated with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. The tool is targeted towards students in grades 3-12. The reporting tool measures and assesses students' physical fitness levels and areas of improvement. The data collection component is crucial for developing, expanding and evaluating physical activity interventions nationwide. Currently, there are efforts to repeal the assessment tool. Joel expressed that the continuity of Fitnessgram is pivotal to promoting regular physical activity in schools which, in turn, reduces the likelihood of childhood obesity.

"Children spend more than 7.5 hours per day in front of some type of electronic screen. Since the 1970s, the obesity rate for children ages 2-19 has tripled, and become the #1 health concern of parents, surpassing drug abuse and smoking."

Joel Romo
Presenter

Partnership for a Healthy Texas coalition was also highlighted. They address and influence critical policy issues relating to obesity. The coalition areas of legislative interests are healthy food financing, the built environment, advancing guidelines for child care providers and enriching physical education in schools.

Mental Health Break

Dalvie Casilang & Nam Nguyen, International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Fellows

Dalvie and Nam guided the audience in a deep breathing meditation exercise set to calming "Tibetan Planetary" music. Deep breathing meditation can reduce stress and anxiety, improve mental concentration and physical stamina, and are beneficial for individuals with insomnia. Nam noted to practice deep breathing exercise 10 minutes before bedtime or most especially after a long day of work.



"Practice deep breathing exercise 10 minutes before bedtime or most especially

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE

- The Texas Legislature meets every odd year for 140 days
- 150 House Members, 31 Senators
- Over 50 Committees to monitor (30 in the House, 20 in the Senate)
- Over 6,400 bills filed each session
- \$209 Billion Budget for FY 2016-17
- Priorities for the 85th Legislative Session include economic challenges, bathroom debate, tax appraisal reform, Child Protective Services reform, and the Public Safety Act

Breakout Sessions

Joel Romo, Texana Public Affairs
"Engaging Legislators from Home"

Joel spoke about how most legislators agree with the following statements about childhood obesity:

- "Health occurs where we live, pray, play, work, and attend school"
- "Much can be done to lower the incidence of childhood obesity"
- "Schools can have an effect on childhood obesity"

To influence lawmakers, it is important to know who your lawmaker is and be on their agenda. In-person visits, emails, and phone calls are also effective. He recommended to get the email of a staffer and build that relationship for greater effect. Providing personal testimonies and attending advocacy days, in-district visits, and town halls are also important.

Joel also had some tips for accessing legislators by social media. Every member of Texas Legislature is on Facebook or Twitter. When posting to these social media outlets, keep messages brief and be respectful. An added benefit of posting comments on Facebook or Twitter is encouraging dialogue from other constituents and raising awareness of your issue or concern. Form letters via traditional mail still work and can add personal stories to increase effectiveness.

When asked about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Joel commented that it is up to the advocates to make sure that PE and Health are prioritized. He suggests that every school district in the state must actively lobby and there are different organizations taking a lead on this – American Heart Association, Cooper Institute, SHAPE America. Pasadena ISD shared their one page ESSA brief about the Texas Education Agency.



Alief ISD commented that local board policy is key – recommendations alone will not make it happen and the conversation must be elevated beyond wellness professionals.

Tim Schauer, Cornerstone Government Affairs
“Engaging Legislators in Austin”

Tim began the session with the importance of traveling to Austin for advocacy. Legislators often decide what issues they will work on based upon lobbyists, constituents, and campaigns. Many legislators will gain support by promising to work on a particular issue.

Tim provided a to-do list before traveling to Austin:

- **Pick ONE policy strategy** from HLM’s community action plan (included at the end of these highlights) that you are personally passionate about and that is important to you.
- **Research the policy strategy you chose.** Determine which legislators are passionate about the issues that you are passionate about. Legislators will listen if they are passionate about the issue. Learn everything there is to know about the issue, including who is on the other side of the issue as well. You don’t have to carry the other side’s message but if the opposing side speaks to legislators before you, be prepared to answer questions, such as “are you sure this will work?” Show statistics that support your issue and explain how and why it will work.
- **Develop an elevator speech.** Sometimes you will have 45 minutes with legislators and other times you get 45 seconds. Be prepared to explain why this bill is good in a short period of time and in a clear manner.
- **Find your incumbent.** Enter your home address at this link: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>
- **Schedule an appointment to meet with a legislator.** Walk-ins are not very effective. They don’t know who you are and you haven’t made an appointment. You might be speaking to an intern. The most effective meetings are the ones where you call or email in advance and make an appointment with who you want to speak to. You may have to invite yourself to a meeting (i.e. “I will be in Austin on December 3rd between 9am-4pm, when would be a good time for me to come by?”).

Not all legislators are created equal. Try to schedule an appointment with the legislator you voted for. They love the fact that you came from their home district and because you are from their district you jump to the front of the list. Each bill goes through committee on house side and on the senate side. Focus on who will be on that committee. Pick two or three members on the committee and talk to them, and give your elevator speech.

“Our political system operates on a participatory democracy – If we don’t participate, individuals on the opposing political side will.”

*Tim Shauer
Presenter*

Q&A WITH TIM

Q: Do legislators keep up with the numbers of each bill?

A: The number is only used to start the conversation. Need to say what the number relates to. They don't have all the numbers memorized.

Q: What is the time frame for calling to schedule a meeting? 1st of January?

A: If you are passionate about an issue you can call now. Most legislators work between 9 and 3.

You are more likely to get an appointment if you make an appointment between now and January 1st. After January 1st, need to call and get an appointment 2 weeks in advance.

Q: Is it better to go individually or as a group?

A: Any visit is better than no visit. If you are only able to go alone, you should still go. If you can get two or three people together who care about the same issue, it will be more effective. For state representatives groups of 3-4 are ideal.

Q: What is the impact on dealing with youth issues and having youth come with you on visit?

A: If you know a youth who is passionate about the issue and can take a day off, bring them with you. Politicians love kids.

Q: Can you leave a bowl of fruit behind?

A: This is acceptable if the item you leave behind is consistent with your message and it is that much more impactful and powerful.

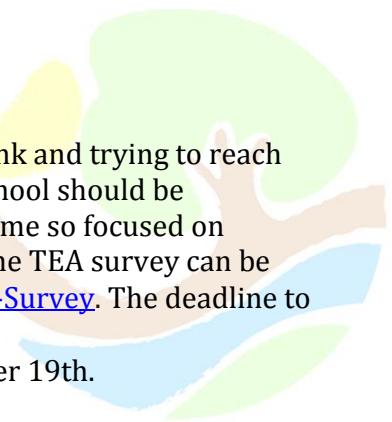
Tim then spoke about how to make the most of a legislative trip to Austin.

- **Get in and Get out** - The faster you can get in and get out is better than staying and talking about topics unrelated to the bill. Go in make your message and get out.
- **“The leave behind”** - Leave behind a one pager with your contact info and a blurb about why the issue is important.
- **Take a picture with them** - Everyone loves selfies these days. Believe it or not, this helps.
- **Make the ask** - Before walking out, ask “Do you know how you are going to vote on this bill? Will you vote yes on this bill?” This gives you an opportunity to follow up with them to see where they stand on the issue and to see if they have decided to vote yes or no. You have to have a yes or no. “We will think about it” is better than no.
- **Now that you are out, go to your next meeting.** If you are going to the capital, plan on having at least 4 or 5 meetings.
- **Thank you/follow-up note:** A thank you email is better than nothing, but if you really want to go the extra step, write a hand written thank you note. It shows you are thankful for their time and allows you to talk with them about the issue again (i.e. “We hope to gain your support” or “Thank you for supporting us on this issue”).

Announcements

- HLM is in process of creating a youth council. This youth platform youth will start and begin the youth advocacy piece of HLM.

- Pam Tevis announced that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has sent out link and trying to reach broad base of community partners. They are trying to look at criteria that school should be accountable for demonstrating success. The No Student Left Behind Act became so focused on academics that other important aspects of student success got left behind. The TEA survey can be found here: <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3003630/ESSA-Public-Input-Survey>. The deadline to complete the survey is November 18th
- Blue Cross Blue Shield will be sponsoring a Kaboom playground on November 19th.
- Southern Obesity Summit is November 13th – 15th

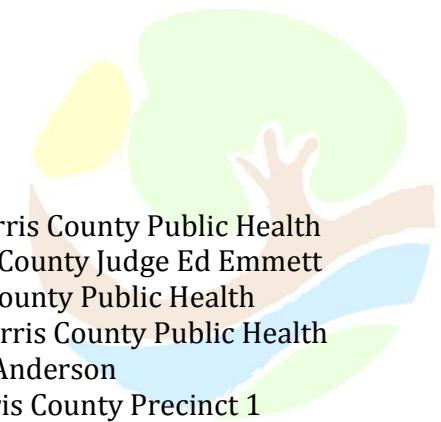


Closing & Adjourn

Christopher Browne closed the meeting by asking everyone to fill in their Commit to Action cards. Those who filled out cards will be followed up with by HLM staff. A copy of the Commit to Action card can be found at the end of these highlights.

Meeting Attendees

Anne Barnes, Legacy Community Health
Anna Brewster, MD Anderson
Aisha Siddiqui, Children's Hospital Association of Texas
Audrey Jefferson-Harrison, Harris County Department of Education
Alan Jackson, HLM-Pasadena Community Task Force
Albert Chang, Harris County Public Health
Amber MacNeish, Pasadena ISD
Christopher Browne, Edminster, Hinshaw, Russ and Associates, Inc.
Coltyn Brown, Harris County Public Health
Dalvie Casilang, ICMA Fellow
David Kronenberger, Houston Food Bank
Donna Miles, Agape Preschool
Ed Gomez, St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Elizabeth Love, Houston Endowment
Frances Nguyen, Harris County Public Health
Guilmate Pierre, City of Houston
Gwen Sims, Harris County Public Health
Harry Hadland, Houston Food Bank
Isioma Uzomah, Department of Family and Protective Services
Jaclyn Lowry, Harris County Public Health
Jennifer Hadaya, Harris County Public Health
Jonnelle Hollins, Houston ISD
Johnna Carlson, Texas Children's Hospital
Jorge Flores, Avenue CDC
Joseph Le, Harris County Precinct 1
Julie Jerden, Harris County Public Health
Katie Chennisi, Harris County Public Health
Katy Oestman, MD Anderson
LaPorcha Carter, Harris County Public Health
Lauren Brooks, Houston Food Bank
Lawrence English, Playworks
Linda Forys, Harris County Public Health
Linsi Broom, City of Houston
Lisa Helfman, HEB/ Brighter Bites
Lisa Lauter, Harris County Public Health
Marina Coryat, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Mark Solano, Harris County Public Health
Mia Stokes, Harris County Public Health
Nancy Correa, Texas Children's Hospital
Nam Nguyen, ICMA Fellow



Nohemi Castillo, Harris County Public Health
Peggy Boice, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett
Peter Tsan, Harris County Public Health
Rocaille Roberts, Harris County Public Health
Rosalind Bello, MD Anderson
Sandra Puente, Harris County Precinct 1
Sandra Wilcoff, Urban Harvest
Sandy Bristow, Oliver Foundation
Padma Swamy, Baylor College of Medicine
Pam Tevis, Pasadena ISD
Toral Sidha, Clinton Foundation
Tunde Lawal, YMCA Houston
Tiffany Thomas
Ugonna Okpala, Harris County Public Health
Victoria Adaramola, Harris County Public Health
Victoria Lippman, Williamson County & Cities Health District
Yasmin Barrera, Harris County Public Health
Yen Nong, Baylor College of Medicine



Healthy Living Matters Pasadena

- Group is working to develop community gardens in the north Pasadena area in partnership with the schools
- Supported the development and adoption of "Safe Neighborhoods" Policy by promoting Safe Routes to Schools
 - o For the first time in Pasadena ISD, over 100 students, parents, staff and community volunteers hopped on the walking school bus early Wednesday morning to celebrate International Walk to School Day at Richey Elementary School
 - o <http://www1.pasadenaisd.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=80772&pageId=30968100>
- *Next meeting: is November 17, 2016 from 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM at Pasadena Public Library – Main Branch*
- *For more information, please contact Katie Chennisi at cchennisi@hcphes.org.*

BUILD Health Challenge (north Pasadena)

- The Harris County BUILD Health Partnership was selected for one of nine inaugural GE Healthy Cities Awards for its work in north Pasadena with a \$25,000 cash prize.
 - o We hope to use the funds to build another community garden in north Pasadena and to support additional Brighter Bites programming.
 - o More information can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2eKiy6Q>
- There are now six Healthy Corner Stores in north Pasadena, seven Brighter Bites locations, and close to 140 Food Prescriptions have been issued (for a total of greater than 7,000 pounds of fresh produce distributed).
- We also just published our CLARA (urban farm) Business Plan through a mini-grant from the Build Healthy Places Network.
- Next meeting: 2016 Annual BUILD Full Partnership Meeting; Thursday, November 17 at 11:30 AM at the Pasadena Public Library. All those involved with BUILD are welcome to attend, but RSVPs are needed.
- For more information and to RSVP for the Partnership Meeting, please contact Jennifer Hadaya at jhadaya@hcphes.org.

Healthcare Sector Updates (HSAT)

- While community based social determinant projects are more prevalent with health organizations, due to the lack of reimbursement payment structures, clinical-social screening is not as much currently
- HSAT is working to encourage social screenings in the clinical setting.
 - o There are a few local efforts already underway [ex: Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, Texas Children's/ Baylor (trials), Harris Health (trials), CHMI-GE Food Insecurity Screenings]
 - o These ongoing efforts and trials/ studies are helping inform the group
- HSAT is working to develop core social determinant measures that all health organizations should try to ask the patient – this will eventually help with population health interventions
- Next meeting: TBD
- For more information, please contact Tanweer Kaleemullah at tkaleemullah@hcphes.org.

Youth Sector

- Confirmed commitments from YMCA, Oliver Foundation, and Pasadena ISD to share leadership of Youth Leadership Council
- Identifying additional partners through commitment cards from Youth Advocacy collaborative meeting in July
- *For more information, please contact Mark Solano at msolano@hcphes.org.*



Early Care & Education/Out-of-School Sector Updates (ECOS)

- We received a Leadership Award for our Call to Action for Providers of Professional Development by the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System
- The Call to Action has been highlighted in various newsletters/email blasts (DSHS, Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office, Live Smart Texas, and Early Years)
- Currently working on the development of an ECE/OST Resource Guide and sample policies
- *Next meeting: December 1 from 9:00 – 10:00 AM at Harris County Public Health [2223 West Loop South, Houston, TX 77027 - Room 532 (5th Floor)]*
- *For more information or to sign up for the ECOS monthly newsletter, please contact Katie Chennisi at cchennisi@hcphes.org.*

Education (K-12) Sector

- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is seeking public input on implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA legislation places considerable emphasis on the importance of Physical Education and Health as key components of a well-rounded education. Previously, Health and Physical Education were marginalized through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act - an action that coincided with rising rates of childhood obesity. With ESSA, funding will be available to states through state block grants. To provide your feedback to TEA, you can complete this survey:
<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3003630/ESSA-Public-Input-Survey>. The deadline to provide input is November 18th at 5pm and takes less than 10 minutes to complete.
Please consider sharing this information on your district's website and encourage others to complete the survey. Health and Physical Education ARE very important factors to address. For more information, please contact Lisa Lauter at llauter@hcphes.org.
- If your agency, NGO, or non-profit would like to present to the Harris County Public Health School Health Leadership Group, please contact Kelly Reed-Hirsch kreed@hcphes.org.

Healthy Living Matters Policy Priorities



GLOBAL POLICY ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY – G1. Advocate for Texas legislators to develop a statewide strategic plan to address hunger, nutrition, physical activity and obesity in children and families.

EAT: The following policy strategies are endorsed by HLM to support access to, and age-appropriate sizes of, healthy foods for all children in Harris County.

E1. Support legislation and policies at the state level that incent the purchase of healthy foods with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars.

E2. Advocate for the development and passage of a state law to create a grocery/food* store loan program to address the problem of food deserts. (*Not limited to grocery stores, may include local grocers, convenience stores, etc.).

E3. Support development and adoption of local laws to promote breastfeeding in Harris County, including recognizing designated breastfeeding-friendly hospitals, legally protecting breastfeeding mothers from harassment in public and while at work, and ensuring mothers are guaranteed a *Mothers' Bill of Rights*.

E4. Encourage use of available public lands in Harris County for the development of community gardens and farmers markets.

E5. Encourage school districts and appropriate public programs to increase awareness and promotion of school food options for low-income students during the summer.

E6. Advocate for low-fat, low-calorie drinks in schools and childcare facilities.

PLAY: The following policy strategies are endorsed by HLM to promote opportunities for safe, adequate, and appropriate physical activity for all children in Harris County.

P1. Support the development and adoption of "Safe Neighborhoods" Policy:

- Eradicate abandoned houses;
- Ensure sufficient public safety officer coverage, encourage community policing approaches;
- Improve animal control efforts to reduce stray animals;
- Fix streets & sidewalks, promote Safe Routes to Schools efforts, build sidewalks in new developments, promote Complete Streets policy;
- Improve lighting in streets and parks; and
- Support the ongoing development of safe trails and parks, such as the Bayou Greenway Initiative and Utility Corridor Improvements.

P2. Support Harris County School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) in implementing policy that requires physical activity (PA) subcommittees and recommendations for joint-use agreements or community/school partnerships.

P3. Increase middle school physical education (PE) requirements to include moderate to vigorous activity for 6 semesters, high school PE requirements to 1.5 semesters, and make 1 semester of health education required for graduation.

P4. Institute a Texas policy on recess that encourages age-appropriate outdoor playtime.

P5. Conduct a study and encourage the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish guidelines for outdoor features on public school campuses to maximize outdoor physical activity.

LEARN: The following policy strategies are endorsed by HLM to promote health education opportunities related to nutrition, physical education, and general healthy living for all children, families and caregivers in Harris County.

L1. Develop guidelines to educate and incent administrators, school teachers, child care providers, and other staff to eat healthy and be physically fit as role models for children.

L2. Support a comprehensive "Community Health Literacy" strategy:

- Support a campaign for healthy eating for families;
- Expand community education programs on how to cook healthy;
- Expand public programs that teach community and backyard gardening; and
- Support a policy to expand coordinated school health strategies to grades 9-12.

L3. Establish state, city, and/or county healthy schools and healthy child care recognition programs with a training component.

L4. Promote outdoor classrooms and incorporate active learning into core curriculum subjects to increase physical activity in Harris County school districts.



As an Healthy Living Matters advocate, we encourage you to commit to take action today!

*Place a check mark by the actions listed below to let us know
how you plan to advocate for young children and their families!*

I am interested in Priority Policy number(s) _____.

I Commit to:

- Identify my local and state legislators.
- Following my state legislators on Facebook and/or Twitter.
- Sharing HLM Priority Policies with a co-worker, friend, or family member.
- Calling my state legislators about HLM.
- Writing to my state legislators about HLM.
- Visiting my state legislators' office to talk about HLM.
- Leading or promoting HLM related legislation.

HCPTHX.ORG

Please return to HLM.

