Research Investment and Job Growth
We support basic research and development funding at a steady rate above inflation for NIH, NSF, ARPA, NASA Office of Education, the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Institute for Education Sciences, Small Business Innovation Research, Small Business Technology Transfer, and the Economic Development Administration.

Census
• Fully fund the 2020 Census.

Sustainable Infrastructure
The Austin region’s rapidly growing population relies heavily on sustainable and proactive infrastructure improvements. We ask that Congress fix the Highway Trust Fund permanently and support the Move America Act. This includes the following:
• New, long-term sustainable infrastructure funding sources, such as a VMT or 0.25 cent/gallon gas tax increase;
• The use of up-to-date population figures to calculate federal transportation disbursements;
• Ensuring Texas can participate in any infrastructure bill that includes use of P3s and continued funding for the Capital Investment Grants program and direction to the U.S. Department of Transportation to enter into new full funding grant agreements and Small Start grant agreements; and
• a fully funded BUILD Grant Program.

Optimize Talent & Workforce Performance
Austin has 47,770 open positions and a 2.3% unemployment rate.

We support the following:
• Increasing legal immigration slots for highly skilled STEM graduates, create entrepreneur visas and legalize DACA beneficiaries; and
• Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act to simplify financial aid, expand eligibility to innovatively designed training opportunities, and improve transparency on completer outcomes.

Innovation
We support an on-time NDAA budget with predictable funding for Military Modernization to accelerate the success of national security innovation in the United States and the Austin region.

Strong Trade Agreements & Opposition to Harmful Tariffs
We oppose new tariffs and other barriers that threaten the competitiveness of U.S. businesses, endanger American jobs, and increase costs for consumers. All trade policies, including the United States/Mexico/Canada Agreement (USMCA), should protect sensitive IP, investment transparency and due process in government procurement.

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FY2020 Strategic Federal Investments

We support the following:

• Ensuring the Basic Allowance for Housing and Locality Adjustments is in line with similarly priced markets to recruit talent to Austin-based defense innovation efforts;
• Maintaining funding to benefit American workers: Pell Grants, AmeriCorps, and Title IV aid allowance for high-demand certifications;
• Allocating 57M for the National Security Innovation Capital (NSIC); and
• Maintaining current funding levels for local priorities, including public broadcasting, Mass Transit Account, National Infrastructure Investment, Community Development Block Grant Program, WIOA, and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.

Infrastructure

The 86th Texas Legislature’s failure to continue Comprehensive Development Agreements has left Texas with no short-term infrastructure investment policy, according to the Partnership for Airport Growth. In addition to policies mentioned on the first page of this document, to keep up with growth and demand, we support the following:

• Using recent census data in federal funding formulas—rather than the 2008 data currently in use—to keep up with the rapid growth in population and transportation needs in Central Texas;
• Repealing federal requirements for projects that have less than 20% federal funding or allowing for at least 50% federal funding on projects;
• Retaining requirements that MPOs update their RTPs every 10-15 years; failure to do this would be problematic in regions like Central Texas that are rapidly growing;
• Prioritizing the following Austin region infrastructure projects: IH-35 and Loop 1 – South MoPac.

Air Services

As Austin-Bergstrom International Airport continues unprecedented passenger growth, we need to support expansion plans through federal funding and smart policies.

Finance Airport Infrastructure:

• We support enhancing the Airport Improvement Program to fund crucial safety, security, and capacity projects at AUS;
• Maximizing the flexibility of the Passenger Facility Charge based on local needs; and
• Preserving tax-exempt bonds and flexible privatization plans.

Support Airport Growth:

• We support reducing regulatory burdens on airports;
• Expanding alternative project delivery methods to accelerate innovation, construction, and job growth; and
• Funding TSA and CBP to provide adequate staff levels for AUS to meet its significant growth in domestic and international air service.

Smart Education Policies to Improve Austin Regional Talent

We support developing workforce education programs that allow the Austin region to meet employer demand. We support reauthorizing the Higher Education Act to include the following:

• Short-term Pell Grants to support students enrolling in innovatively-designed, high-demand workforce programs. We also support increasing the maximum Pell Grant award and indexing to inflation;
• Federal Student Loans to allow institutions to set lower borrowing limits based on course, enrollment intensity, and academic preparedness. We also support protecting subsidized loans for undergraduate students and upholding loan repayments and public service loan forgiveness. We are also supporting the Alternative Project Delivery Methods to accelerate innovation, construction, and job growth; and
• Funding TSA and CBP to provide adequate staff levels for AUS to meet its significant growth in domestic and international air service.

Public Policy That Works for Central Texas

• Protecting funds to institutions serving traditionally underrepresented populations, such as MSIs, HSIs, and HBCUs;

We support reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to include the following:

• Continuation of FY20 funding at FY19 levels;
• Allowing WIBs to directly operate workforce centers;
• Creating financial incentive for industry employers to create/implement apprenticeships; and
• Expanding Workforce Opportunity Tax Credits to allow employers to provide work-based learning to under-resourced populations.

We support an infrastructure bill that includes adequate funding for apprenticeships in skilled trades and IT.

Immigration & DACA

Meaningful immigration reform to help Texas businesses access the world’s best talent should include the following:

• Increasing the number of legal immigration slots for highly-skilled immigrants;
• Creation of an Entrepreneur/Start-Up Visa;
• Legalizing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status beneficiaries.

Health Care

• Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) Payments – We oppose reduction in funding for the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program and support delaying the Medicaid DSH cuts scheduled to take effect October 1, 2019.
• Value-Based Care Models – We support continuing value-based care-endorsed models that improve health outcomes and reduce cost through Medicare, Medicaid, the private sector, and other federally funded health coverage programs.
• Graduate Medical Education – We support the bipartisan Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act. We also support extending the current GME period from 5 to 10 years to allow cities like Austin that have a significant shortage of physicians, especially subspecialists, more time to build their training programs.
• Prescription Drugs – We support efforts to lower the cost of prescription drugs.
• Health Insurance Marketplace – We support stability in the health insurance marketplace and provide appropriate options for coverage that are affordable and accessible to patients.
• Telehealth – We support the use of and coverage for telehealth technologies for health care delivery, education, and health information services.

Innovation

We support evaluating existing regulations unnecessarily inhibiting technology innovation, encouraging the use of industry-developed global standards in regulation, and strengthening STEM education within the NASA budget to support our growing need for highly-skilled workers.

• Equality Act (H.R. 5 & S. 788) – We support amending the federal Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.
• Accelerating Defense Innovation Act – We support instituting a pilot program within the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program to improve access for small business innovators.
• Helping Angels Lead Our Startups Act (S. 1063/H.R. 1909) – We support legislation that encourages increased participation in Demo Days by removing a potential regulatory complication.
• Startup Act (S. 328) – We support legislation that would accelerate the commercialization of university research, creative inquiry and review, improve the regulatory processes at the federal, state and local levels, and modernize a critical Economic Development Administration (EDA) program.
• Broadband – We support pro-investment, competitively neutral tax and public policy reform that removes barriers to infrastructure development, encourages private investment, and expands all high-speed internet services.
• Data Privacy – We support federal legislation that ensures companies use personal data responsibly and transparently through a security and corporate accountability framework.
• Innovation to Entrepreneurs Act of 2019 (H.R. 5397/S. 118) – We support legislation that encourages increased private sector partnerships, translates research into commercial initiatives, and creates jobs.
• Championing American Businesses Through Diplomacy Act (H.R. 1104) – We support bolstering U.S. business competitiveness abroad by prioritizing economic and commercial diplomacy through enhanced partnership integration with the Department of State, Department of Commerce and U.S. diplomatic missions throughout the world.

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