

Senate Business & Commerce Committee

May 18, 2022

Interim Charge, State Workforce: Study where state employees are located and the benefits and drawbacks of remote working. Evaluate the impact of the potential growth of remote work and proximity of employees to their place of employment on traffic studies over the next 10 years. Study and make recommendations for establishing uniform statewide standards for remote work. Study possible implications and standards for statewide recruitment and employment of remote state employees from all parts of the state.

I am Ann Bishop, Executive Director of the Texas Public Employees Association (TPEA). Thank you for the opportunity to present the perspective of state employees working from alternate work sites.

First and foremost, I want to shout out to all state workers who have risen to the formidable challenges of floods, freezes, now fires, and the pandemic. Many dedicated state employees have carried through while primarily working from home.

They have done so with no noticeable drop in performance. The missions you, the Legislature, have assigned them are being accomplished with conscientious competence.

As a former state agency ED, I see the budgetary benefits of having employees work from home, e.g., lower office upkeep and utility expenses. Also, efficiency and morale significantly improve for many employees while working outside the office. In this inflationary environment, they especially appreciate the cost savings from not having to commute to work.

There are two key points to consider when assessing the value of tasks undertaken outside the usual office settings. One is whether an agency administration, while allowing such flexible work, retains its discretion to determine policies in this regard, e.g., who works where, when, and how they do so. An agency should preferably set policies permitting its managers and supervisors to establish the parameters for employees working outside the office. Two, goals and performance measures should be clear to all concerned.

In brief, TPEA supports the continued use of alternate work sites for many employees, with the caveats mentioned earlier.