Speaker Burrows Announces Additional Staff Assignments for the 89th Legislative Session

AUSTIN, Texas – Speaker of the Texas House Dustin Burrows today announced additional senior and policy staff assignments in the Office of the Speaker.

Sydney Watts will serve as Director of Administration and **Kimberly Carmichael** as Press Secretary.

Under the direction of Jimmy Skipton, General Counsel and Policy Director, and alongside Andrew Blifford, Director of Finance, the following individuals will compose the Speaker's policy department and provide specialized expertise in their assigned subject areas to the Speaker, his administration, members of the House, and their staff:

- **Sallie Bentley** – *Senior Budget Advisor and Policy Advisor for Ways and Means.* Sallie's legislative experience includes serving as a budget advisor in the administration of three Texas Speakers, as a budget and policy advisor in the Office of Governor Greg Abbott, and as chief of staff in the Texas House.

- **Sam Bacarisse** – *Policy Advisor for Delivery of Government Efficiency; Environmental Regulation; Insurance (property and casualty insurance); Natural Resources; and Trade, Workforce, and Economic Development.* Sam brings over 12 years' experience working in the Texas House, having served as chief of staff and committee clerk to various House committees, including the Natural Resources Committee.

- **Jason Briggs** – *Assistant General Counsel and Policy Advisor for Elections; Pensions, Investments, and Financial Services; and State Affairs.* Jason has previously served as policy advisor and general counsel in the Office of the Speaker, as budget and policy

advisor for Governor Greg Abbott, and as chief of staff and committee clerk in the Texas House.

- **Colin Davis** – *Assistant General Counsel and Policy Advisor for Energy Resources; Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence; Licensing and Administrative Procedure; and Transportation.* Colin joins the Office of the Speaker after serving as a chief of staff in the Texas House and as committee clerk to the House Committee on Energy Resources. He previously worked in the Office of the Speaker in 2019.

- **Madelyn Franks** – *Policy Advisor for Human Services; Insurance (health insurance); and Public Health.* Madi joins the Office of the Speaker from the Department of Family and Protective Services, where she served as chief of staff. Her state government experience includes several years as a chief of staff in the Texas House and budget and policy advisor to Governor Greg Abbott.

- **Sarah Harrington** – *Policy Advisor for Public Education and Higher Education.* Sarah joins the Office of the Speaker from the Texas Education Agency, where she has served in various capacities for nearly seven years, including most recently as Director of Government Relations. Her legislative experience includes seven years in the Texas Senate as a senior policy analyst and committee clerk for the Senate Higher Education Committee.

- **Marissa Patton** – *Policy Advisor for Agriculture and Livestock; Culture, Recreation, and Tourism; Intergovernmental Affairs; and Land and Resource Management.* Marissa's legislative experience includes 15 years of policy, legislative, and grassroots advocacy work between the Office of the Speaker, Texas Farm Bureau, and Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Associations.

- **Shakira Pumphrey** – *Policy Advisor for Corrections; Criminal Jurisprudence; and Homeland Security, Public Safety, and Veterans' Affairs.* Shakira has nearly a decade of experience in the Texas House, including serving as policy advisor on criminal justice and public safety matters to four Texas Speakers of the House.

"I am proud to have assembled a highly qualified team of professionals that is well-prepared to advance the priorities of the Texas House and all Texans this session," said Speaker Burrows. "Our team has been working around the clock to assist House Members with developing legislation and establishing their priorities and to ensure the Office of the Speaker and the Texas House are off to a productive start to the session. The collective expertise of our full team will be pivotal as we address the complex issues facing our state today, and I am confident in their abilities to ensure a successful 89th Legislative Session for the people of Texas."

For further information, including the full list of staff assignments, please visit: https://house.texas.gov/speaker#office_staff.

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