



Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

October 30, 2020

Dee Adams Budgewater
Deputy Executive Commissioner, Health, Developmental, and Independent Services
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Via Email: Dee.Budgewater@hsc.state.tx.us

Dear Commissioner Budgewater,

The Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC) and its 87 healthcare, faith, and community-based member organizations are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Texas women, babies, and families by ensuring access to preventive healthcare for all Texas women.

We are writing to express concerns raised by members regarding the most recent open procurement process and award notices for the Healthy Texas Women (HTW), Family Planning Program (FPP), and Breast and Cervical Cancer Services Program (BCCS). Adding new qualified providers to the network could be beneficial, but it should not be done at the expense of historic high-volume providers. We support the Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) decision to re-evaluate awards and maintain funding to women's health program contractors in the meantime. We urge HHSC to be transparent in methodology used to determine awards and to seek additional funding from the Legislative Budget Board to ensure adequate funding to support the women's health programs.

HTW's cost reimbursement portion is critically important in supporting participating providers and the safety net. HTW cost reimbursement ensures funding for activities that include: HTW fee for service program client enrollment assistance; client and community based educational activities related to HTW; and staff development and training related to HTW service delivery. These activities are designed to work in tandem with HTW fee for service to support positive client outcomes. Drastic shifts or reductions in this funding source will run the risk of handicapping providers who need these funds for outreach, client and provider education, and other resources to ensure quality service delivery.

The FPP fee for service and infrastructure funding is both equally important. Contractors utilize the money for client services but also to develop and maintain infrastructure needed to provide those services, such as clinic facilities, staff salaries, and utilities.¹ FPP is a cornerstone of our

¹ Legislative Budget Board Staff. Overview of Women's Health Programs. April 2019.
http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/Staff_Report/2019/5098_WomensHealthPrograms.pdf.



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women's healthcare safety net. Services are consistently in high demand and program funds routinely run out before the end of the funding cycle.

In fact, consistent funding for historic high-volume providers in all three women's health programs is critical to upholding the women's preventive health provider network, so uninsured and underinsured women can access care.

Women's health in Texas has a long history of programmatic and administrative disruptions, and it is the providers and clients bearing the brunt of these changes. The 2011 family planning budget cuts resulted in at least 82 women's healthcare clinics closing,² cutting off preventive care, including well-woman examinations, breast and cervical cancer screenings, and contraception for low-income women. As a result, the state saw a rise in Medicaid births in 2014-2015 and an increase in costs in Medicaid by approximately \$103 million.³ It has taken years to repair the damage to the women's health safety net provider network. Now that some stability has emerged, we strongly caution against drastic funding shifts or reductions and recommend transparency and improved communication with participating providers.

The women's health programs are always essential, but especially now during a global health pandemic, where so many have lost or are at risk of losing healthcare coverage through their employers, safety net programs will be even more crucial. In Texas, three out of ten women are low income and one in five are uninsured.⁴ Updated census data released this month from 2019 shows that Texas remains the state with the highest number of uninsured residents with 5.2 million or 18.4 percent of Texans without insurance,⁵ and we know the pandemic will only exacerbate these rates. We cannot afford any harmful disruptions to the provider network participating in these programs and serving women across Texas most in need.

The Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition urges HHSC to work with the Legislative Budget Board and Texas Legislature to secure the funding needed to adequately support these programs in lieu of drastically shifting funding during the current fiscal year. We also strongly recommend clear and transparent communication with awardees on methodology used to re-evaluate awards when the updated notices are sent out.

² Dr. Kari White, Co-investigator on Texas Policy Evaluation Project, Testimony to the Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee, September 13, 2016, <http://liberalarts.utexas.edu/txpep/legislative-testimony/HHSC%20White.php>

³ Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Legislative Appropriations Request Fiscal Years 2014-2015.

⁴ Hamel, L., Wu, B., Brodie, M. Sim, S., & Marks, E. (2018). Views and Experiences Related to Women's Health in Texas, Selected findings from the Kaiser Family Foundation/Episcopal Health Foundation 2018 Texas Health Policy Survey.

⁵ Katherine Keisler-Starkey and Lisa N. Bunch U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, P60-271, Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2019, U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, DC, 2020.



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TWHC represents various organizations providing direct healthcare, advocacy, or other community-based services across Texas. We are eager to work with you on these issues. We are happy to provide any additional information and welcome the opportunity to schedule follow-up conversations on the women's health budget and other topics relating to women's health.

Thank you for taking our concerns and recommendations into consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evelyn Delgado', is placed over a light gray rectangular background.

Evelyn Delgado
Chair, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

CC: Cecile Erwin Young, Executive Commissioner, HHSC
Trey Wood, Chief Financial Officer, HHSC
Michelle Alletto, Chief Program & Services Officer, HHSC
Sarah Hicks, Director of Policy and Budget, Office of the Governor
Heather Fleming, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor
Jerry McGinty, Director, Legislative Budget Board
Sen. Jane Nelson, Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Rep. Sarah Davis, Chair, House Appropriations Article II Subcommittee
Rep. Donna Howard, Chair, House Women's Health Caucus
Rep. Senfronia Thompson, Chair, House Public Health Committee

Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition Steering Committee Members

Texas Medical Association
District XI (Texas) American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Texas Academy of Family Physicians
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Teaching Hospitals of Texas
Every Body Texas
Texans Care for Children
Every Texan
Chair - Healthy Futures of Texas

Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition General Members

Access Esperanza Clinics Inc.
Amistad Community Health Center
Austin Advanced Practice Nurses
Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility AWHONN
Texas
Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, Inc. Brazos
Valley Nurse Practitioner Association Cactus Health
Cardea
Center for Community Health, UNTHSC
Centering Healthcare Institute
Central Texas Nurse Practitioners
Children's Hospital Association of Texas
Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice
Coastal Bend Advanced Practice Nurses
Coastal Bend Wellness Foundation
Community Healthcare Center
Consortium of Texas Certified Nurse Midwives
Department of Ob/Gyn of UNTHSC and the ForHER
Institute
El Buen Samaritano
El Centro de Corazón
El Paso Area Advanced Practice Nurse Association
Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley
Fort Worth Region Nurse Practitioners
Haven Health
Hill Country Advanced Practice Nurses & Physicians
Assistants Association
Houston Area Chapter of NAPNAP
Houston Area Nurse Practitioners
Improving Maternal Health
Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice Texas
League of Women Voters of Texas
Legacy Community Health Services
Lone Star Family Health Center
March of Dimes – Texas
Mental Health America of Greater Houston National
Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's
Health
National Council of Jewish Women—Texas State
Policy Advocacy Network
North Harris Montgomery Advanced Practice Nurse
Society

North Texas Alliance to Reduce Teen Pregnancy
North Texas Nurse Practitioners
Nurse-Family Partnership
Panhandle Nurse Practitioner Association
Pasadena Health Center
People's Community Clinic
Port Arthur Housing Authority
Pregnancy and Postpartum Health Alliance of Texas
SALVERE (Striving to Achieve Literacy via Education,
Research, and Engagement)
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
San Antonio Nurses in Advanced Practice Schneider
Communications
South Plains Nurse Practitioner Association
South Texas Family Planning & Health Corp.
Southeast Texas Nurse Practitioner Associates
Special Health Resources
St. David's Foundation
Susan Wolfe and Associates, LLC
Texas Association of Community Health Plans Texas
Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Texas Council on Family Violence
Texas Health Institute
Texas Hospital Association
Texas Medical Association Alliance
Texas Nurse Practitioners
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Oral Health Coalition
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Texas Women's Foundation
The Contraceptive Initiative
The SAFE Alliance
The Women's Fund for Health Education and
Resiliency
United Methodist Women
University Health System
Valley AIDS Council
Women's & Men's Health Services of the Coastal
Bend, Inc.
Young Invincibles