



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contact:

Dr. Janet Realini, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition Chair
JRealini@TexasWHC.org or 210-223-4589

Governor Abbott's Decision to Veto SB 790 Will Impair State's Ability to Serve Vulnerable Women

Austin, TX (June 15, 2017) - The Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC) is disappointed in Governor Abbott's decision to veto SB 790 by Senator Borris Miles, the companion bill to HB 279 by Representative Donna Howard. This bill would have extended the Women's Health Advisory Committee (WHAC) until September 2019.

"The WHAC has provided critical guidance in the development of the state's new women's health programs, Healthy Texas Women (HTW) and the Family Planning Program (FPP)," said Dr. Janet Realini, Chair of the TWHC. These programs serve as the primary state-funded safety net for low-income women in need of essential preventive services such as cancer screenings and contraception. "Access to preventive healthcare is vital to the health and well-being of women and babies, and to the fiscal health of our state."

Since cuts first occurred in 2011, Texas's women's healthcare programs have been in a state of constant flux, with substantial program changes introduced every two years. Although HTW and the FPP officially launched in July of 2016, the programs are still in a relatively early developmental stage, with little availability of service-delivery data and continuing concerns about provider capacity. Texas is in the process of applying for a federal Medicaid waiver to fund the HTW program, which may lead to many more program changes affecting our fragile safety net. Such changes will need the input and expertise of the WHAC, which provides a forum for family planning providers and other stakeholders to make recommendations to state leaders.

Amid these program changes, the state is also contending with the threat of Zika transmission and a high maternal mortality rate.

"In light of the many challenges facing women in our state, it is more important than ever to have an advisory body like the WHAC that can ensure the new programs meet the needs of vulnerable Texas women," Dr. Realini said.

The TWHC urges HHSC to provide new public forums that allow family planning providers and community stakeholders to monitor and influence the continuing development of our state's women's health programs.

For more information, contact Alice Bufkin, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition: ABufkin@TexasWHC.org.

The Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition is a coalition of 67 healthcare, faith, and advocacy organizations committed to ensuring access to preventive care – including contraception – for all Texas women.