

April 19, 2021

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Phelan, and Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature:

Our organizations represent a broad range of employers, physicians and health care providers, county officials, social service entities, and policy advocates and experts. We come together here to ask you to support increased health coverage for Texans. We specifically support a coverage initiative that is bipartisan, funded through available federal dollars, structured to be neutral for the state's budget, and designed to meet Texas' specific needs, values, and circumstances.

We write to you with urgency, with only a few weeks left in the legislative session, because we believe this issue can no longer wait. The passage of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) means billions more dollars are available to Texas right now for expanded health coverage. According to recently released estimates from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Texas will be eligible for \$3.9 billion more over two years, in addition to the increase in federal matching funds available through the remainder of the public health emergency. These dollars are in addition to ongoing enhanced federal matching dollars that provide a 9-to-1 return for Texans.

It is imperative that the Texas legislature and leadership act now to capture this additional funding. Texans cannot wait. Many continue to reel from the ongoing health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Extending coverage to them will clearly demonstrate Texas' commitment to economic freedom and security. Access to coverage keeps hard-working people healthy and on the job; it supports entrepreneurs' efforts to start new businesses; and it protects Texans from serious financial challenges — compared to the national average, Texans are more likely than other Americans to have medical debt in collections (23% compared to 15%).

Accessing federal funds now will bring billions of vital dollars into the state budget and economy.

A range of projections by Texas researchers shows that the state can implement a budget-neutral coverage option or even save money by increasing coverage. Moreover, as pointed out in the recent letter from the Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce — the eight largest chambers of commerce in the state, representing regions with more than 20 million Texans combined — increased coverage would reduce uncompensated health care costs for local governments.

To remain competitive in the global economy, Texas simply cannot afford to rank dead last in both the number and percentage of people without health coverage. More than 1-in-5 Texans lack health insurance today, creating a huge drag on our economy and our health system. According to the [National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine](#), “It is both mistaken and dangerous to assume the persistence of a sizable uninsured population ... harms only those who are uninsured.” All Texans pay the price.

Greater health coverage also represents a lifeline for Texas’ rural communities, which have uninsured rates that far exceed urban areas. This undermines the financial stability of rural hospitals, physicians, and providers. Since 2013, at least two dozen Texas hospitals have closed in part because of high uncompensated care costs.

And access to health care coverage would help tens of thousands of essential workers who have helped get Texas through the pandemic, but whose jobs often do not come with health insurance. Further, a variety of public surveys point to widespread, bipartisan support for increased federally funded health coverage.

Texans deserve better health and access to health care — which requires health coverage. Thirty-eight other states have already expanded health care coverage. We urge you to work with other state leaders and lawmakers and our organizations this year to pass a Texas-specific solution that will insure as many Texans as possible, bring federal dollars back to Texas, bolster rural and urban economies, protect the financial viability of rural and urban health care safety-net systems, and put money into the state budget.

Thank you for your service and timely consideration on this important issue. With your leadership, we feel confident Texas can adopt a plan in short order that is rooted in Texas’ values, sustains Texas’ economic vitality, and promotes prosperity and good health among all Texans.

Sincerely,

Statewide Physician and Provider Associations/Groups

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists District XI (Texas)
Doctors for America, Texas Chapter
Texas Association of Neurological Surgeons
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter
Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Texas Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Society
Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
Texas Association of Community Health Plans
Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians Services
Texas College of Emergency Physicians
Texas Doctors for Social Responsibility
Texas Society for Gastroenterology and Endoscopy
Texas Health Care Association
Texas Medical Association
Texas Neurological Society
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Ophthalmological Association
Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH)
Texas Orthopaedic Association
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Association of Otolaryngology
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
Texas PMR Society
Texas Primary Care Consortium
Texas Radiological Society

Local Officials

Bastrop County
City of San Antonio
Conference of Urban Counties
County of Bexar
Gregg County Extension Office
Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis
Harris County Commissioners Court
Harris County Judge's Office
Hutchinson County
North Texas Commission
Office of El Paso County Commissioner David C. Stout
Office of the County Judge - Bastrop County
Office of the County Judge - Dallas County

Chambers of Commerce

Greater Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce
North Dallas Chamber of Commerce
San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
The Longview Chamber of Commerce
United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce

Statewide Organizations

AARP Texas
American Heart Association
Autism Society of Texas
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association
Bridging Medical Gaps Collaboration
Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement
Children at Risk
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Circle Up United Methodist Women for Moms
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Cover Texas Nowevery
Episcopal Health Foundation
Every Body Texas
Every Texan (formally CPPP)
Feeding Texas
Jolt Action
La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
League of Women Voters of Texas
Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.
Mi Familia Vota
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas
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National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Sueños Sin Fronteras de Tejas (SSFTX)
Texans Care for Children
Texas 2036

Texas AFL-CIO
Texas Alliance for Retired Americans-President Anthony Padilla
Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Texas Data Quality Coalition
Texas Health Institute
Texas Impact
Texas Latino Policy Symposium
Texas Medical Home Initiative
Texas Organizing Project
Texas Parent to Parent
Texas State Alliance of YMCAs
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
TexProtects
THAAT Ranch
The Afiya Center
The Arc of Texas
The Salvation Army
The Texas Patient Safety Initiative
TX Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
UnidosUS
United Ways of Texas
Young Invincibles

Local Organizations

AccelHealth
Access Esperanza Clinics Inc.
AccessHealth
Andrews Center
Any Baby Can
Asian American Health Coalition dba HOPE Clinic
Bee Busy Wellness Center
Bexar County Medical Society
Center for Health Care Services
Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe
Centro San Vicente
Central Texas Interfaith
Change Happens
CitySquare
Clarity Child Guidance Center

CommuniCare Health Centers
Community Health Centers of South Central Texas
Community Family Centers
Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions
Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council
Dillon Joyce Ltd
Doctors for Change
Dominican Sisters of Houston
East Texas Human Needs Network
Educate Midland
El Centro del Barrio, DBA CentroMed
El Paso Community Action Program Project BRAVO, Inc.
Faith Commons
Family Service
Family to Family Network
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston
Foundation Communities
Gateway Community Health Center, Inc.
Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest
Good Life Outcomes (GLO) Program at Change Happens
Gulf Coast Adapt
Gulf Coast Council of La Raza, Inc.
Gulf Coast Health Center, Inc.
Health Services of North Texas
Heart of Texas Community Health Center
Henderson Interchurch Ministry
Hope Family Health Center
Houston Area Women's Center
Houston Food Bank
International Valley Health Institute
Jefferson County Medical Society
Jewish Family Service Austin
Jewish Family Service of Dallas
Jewish Family Service Houston
La Esperanza Clinic
Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic
Mission East Dallas and Metroplex Project
NAMI Central Texas
NAMI El Paso Dallas
NAMI San Antonio

NAMI Temple Area
NAMI Texas of Palestine
New Hope Housing
North Texas Area Community Health Center
Panhandle Community Services
Pasadena Health Center
Paso del Norte Center of Hope
PediPlace
People's Community Clinic
Project Vida Health Center
Prosper Waco
Proyecto Azteca
ResourceCare
Smith County Behavioral Health Leadership Team
Southeast Texas Faith and Community Leaders
Southern Dallas Progress Community Development Corporation
Special Health Resources
Stephen F Austin Community Health Center
Su Clinica
Tahirih Justice Center (Houston)
Temple Emanu-El Dallas
The Metropolitan Organization of Houston (TMO)
The Tyler Loop
Travis County Medical Society
True Vine Baptist Church
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas
United Way of Southern Cameron County
United Way of Tarrant County
University Health
Valley AIDS Council
Valley Interfaith
Vecino Health Centers
Vickery Meadow Youth Development Foundation
Voices for Children of San Antonio
Waco Family Medicine Institute
Wellness Pointe
Your Health Clinic dba Callie Clinic