



T E X A S
Women's Healthcare
COALITION

House Human Services Committee

HB 744

Testimony of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

March 19, 2019

The Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC) and its 84 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. Access to preventive and preconception care – including health screenings and contraception – means healthy, planned pregnancies and the early detection of cancers and other treatable conditions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Representative Toni Rose's House Bill 744, which directs the Health and Human Services Commission to allow a woman on Pregnant Women's Medicaid to receive Medicaid coverage for 12 months postpartum. By improving the continuity of care for postpartum women, this bill will help reduce instances of maternal death in Texas and improve health outcomes for moms and babies.

Continuity of care to reduce maternal mortality in Texas

Investing in women's healthcare today is crucial given the Texas maternal health landscape. Maternal death and pregnancy related complications remain a serious concern. In the past two years, researchers discovered alarming increases in Texas' maternal mortality rates. The Department of State Health Services conducted further research and found some inaccuracies to the data; however, after an enhanced assessment, they noted there was still an increase in maternal mortality numbers.¹ Not only are maternal deaths alarming, but pregnancy complications also put mothers at risk.

Moreover, the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force found that the majority of maternal deaths occurred more than 60-days postpartum and that many of them were preventable.ⁱⁱ Systemic contributing factors that were identified included a lack in the continuity of care due to the inability to secure outpatient postpartum care – and the inability to access interconception care services.ⁱⁱⁱ Today, Pregnant Women’s Medicaid only provides postpartum coverage for up to 60 days. In Texas, three out of ten women are low income and one in five are uninsured.^{iv} For many women, once they lose Medicaid coverage, there is no other option for accessing comprehensive healthcare.

Although there are many factors that contribute to these poor health outcomes, we know that one of the best strategies to reverse these trends is to ensure women have access to healthcare before, during, and after pregnancy – as recommended by the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force.^v

Improving health outcomes for moms and babies

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists released an opinion on the importance of postpartum care, along with several recommendations on how to make improvements. For optimal health outcomes, postpartum care should be an ongoing process tailored to the specific needs of every woman rather than one or two postpartum encounters.^{vi} Access to care is integral to ensuring providers are able to implement such recommendations and that mothers receive the appropriate care for as long as needed post-delivery. Once a woman gives birth, she is learning to care for her newborn, adjusting to changing hormones, dealing with sleep deprivation, navigating breastfeeding, experiencing new or exacerbated mental health issues, and adjusting to pain and an increased stress level.^{vii} Providing only 60-days postpartum comprehensive healthcare coverage may not be enough time for a woman to realize all of her needs, access care, and ultimately make a full recovery.

Access to postpartum care allows women to plan with her doctor, be advised on optimal birth spacing and counseled on contraception options. When women are able to plan and space their pregnancies, mothers experience healthier outcomes and babies have less risk of prematurity and low birth weight.^{viii ix} Planned pregnancies also have a healthier start. The benefits include earlier prenatal care, less alcohol and tobacco exposure, more folic acid to prevent birth defects, and a greater likelihood of breastfeeding, as well as many positive outcomes for children.^{x xi} Extending the length of postpartum coverage for women on Medicaid will help them begin a subsequent pregnancy healthier, improve outcomes for both mom and baby, and reduce Medicaid costs during delivery and for the infant.

Access to healthcare, especially women’s health and family planning services, is critical for all Texas women. Thank you for your consideration, and for your commitment to improving the

lives of women and families in Texas. If you have any questions or if we can provide further information, please contact me at (210) 223-4589 or EDelgado@TexasWHC.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn Delgado

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Evelyn Delgado". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E".

Chair, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

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
Women's Health and Family Planning Association of Texas
Texans Care for Children
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Chair - Healthy Futures of Texas

Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition General Members

Access Esperanza Clinics Inc.	North Texas Alliance to Reduce Teen Pregnancy
Amistad Community Health Center	North Texas Nurse Practitioners
Austin Advanced Practice Nurses	Panhandle Nurse Practitioner Association
Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility	Pasadena Health Center
AWHONN Texas	People's Community Clinic
Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, Inc.	Port Arthur Housing Authority
Brazos Valley Nurse Practitioner Association	Pregnancy and Postpartum Health Alliance of Texas
Cardea	SALVERE (Striving to Achieve Literacy via
Center for Community Health, UNTHSC	Education, Research, and Engagement)
Centering Health Institute	San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
Central Texas Nurse Practitioners	San Antonio Nurses in Advanced Practice
Children's Hospital Association of Texas	Schneider Communications
Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice	South Plains Nurse Practitioner Association
Coastal Bend Advanced Practice Nurses	South Texas Family Planning & Health Corp.
Coastal Bend Wellness Foundation	Southeast Texas Nurse Practitioner Associates
Community Healthcare Center	Special Health Resources
Consortium of Texas Certified Nurse Midwives	St. David's Foundation
Department of Ob/Gyn of UNTHSC and the ForHER	Susan Wolfe and Associates, LLC
Institute	Texas Association of Community Health Plans
El Buen Samaritano	Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
El Centro de Corazón	Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
El Paso Area Advanced Practice Nurse Association	Texas Council on Family Violence
Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley	Texas Health Institute
Fort Worth Region Nurse Practitioners	Texas Hospital Association
Haven Health	Texas Medical Association Alliance
Hill Country Advanced Practice Nurses & Physicians	Texas Nurse Practitioners
Assistants Association	Texas Nurses Association
Houston Area Chapter of NAPNAP	Texas Oral Health Coalition
Houston Area Nurse Practitioners	Texas Pediatric Society
League of Women Voters of Texas	Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Legacy Community Health Services	Texas Women's Foundation
Lone Star Family Health Center	The Contraceptive Initiative
March of Dimes – Texas	The SAFE Alliance
Mental Health America of Greater Houston	The Women's Fund for Health Education and
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in	Resiliency
Women's Health	United Methodist Women
National Council of Jewish Women—Texas State	University Health System
Policy Advocacy Network	Valley AIDS Council
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health	Women's & Men's Health Services of the Coastal
North Harris Montgomery Advanced Practice Nurse	Bend, Inc.
Society	Young Invincibles

ⁱ Texas Department of State Health Services. "Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report." September 2018. Accessed at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF14/20180927/108724/HHRG-115-IF14-20180927-SD022.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Hollier, L. (January 2019). Texas Maternal Morbidity and Mortality: Past, Present, & Future. Presentation at The Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies 2019 Conference.

^{iv} 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.

^v Ibid

^{vi} The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Presidential Task Force on Redefining the Postpartum Visit, Committee on Obstetric Practice. (May 2018). Optimizing Postpartum Care. ACOG Committee Opinion.

^{vii} Declercq, E. R., Sakala, C., Corry, M. P., Applebaum, S., & Herrlich, A. (2014). Major Survey Findings of Listening to Mothers(SM) III: New Mothers Speak Out: Report of National Surveys of Women's Childbearing Experiences Conducted October-December 2012 and January-April 2013. *The Journal of perinatal education*, 23(1), 17-24.

^{viii} Conde-Agudelo A, Rosas-Bermudez A, Kafury-Goeta AC. Birthspacing and risk of adverse perinatal outcomes: a meta-analysis. *JAMA* 2006; 295(15): 1809-1823.

^{ix} Zhu BP. Effect of interpregnancy interval on birth outcomes: findings from three recent US studies. *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 2005; 89(Supplement 1): S25-S33.

^x Gipson JD, Koenig MA, Hindin MJ. The effects of unintended pregnancy on infant, child, and parental health: a review of the literature. *Studies in Family Planning* 2008; 39(1); 18-38.

^{xi} The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Fast Facts: The consequences of unplanned pregnancy, May 2008. Accessed at <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/fast-facts-consequences-of-unplannedpregnancy.pdf>, January 12, 2013.