



T E X A S
Women's Healthcare
COALITION

House Public Health Committee
Testimony of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition
May 8, 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 chance to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 750. This bill is a great opportunity to improve maternal health and the benefits women receive in the state healthcare programs that serve them. Investing in women's preventive healthcare is crucial given the Texas maternal health landscape. In the past two years, researchers discovered alarming increases in state maternal mortality rates. The Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force found that the majority of maternal deaths occurred 60-days postpartum and that black women bear the greatest risk for maternal death.¹ Although there are many factors that contribute to these poor health outcomes and racial disparities, we know that one of the best strategies we have 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.²

TWHC respectfully offers the following recommendations to optimize the beneficial impact of SB 750 for Texas women.

1) Evaluation and Enhancement of Postpartum Care Services for Certain Women

¹ 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>

² Ibid

TWHC supports the Task Force's specific recommendation that healthcare coverage should be extended to 12-months postpartum. This would ensure that all conditions women experience during the postpartum period are adequately addressed and treated.

Eligible women are automatically enrolled into Healthy Texas Women (HTW) after their Pregnant Women's Medicaid coverage ends. SB 750 offers another opportunity to connect women with necessary postpartum services by adding more benefits to the HTW program. To be successful with this secondary route, TWHC proposes:

- Providing enough funding to support HTW's projected caseload growth as well as the cost associated with adding more postpartum benefits in the service array. The current Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) exceptional item request is only based on maintaining current services and meeting projected caseload growth. If adding additional services, there must be additional dollars allocated to HTW on top of the exceptional item dollars for this proposed solution to work.
- Directing HHSC to establish a workgroup of physicians, experts, and stakeholders to assist agency staff in the development of enhanced HTW benefits.
- Instructing HHSC to implement strategies to ensure women utilizing CHIP-Perinatal are connected to the Family Planning Program.

2) Continuity of Care for Certain Women Enrolling in the Healthy Texas Women Program

In Texas, three-out-of-ten women are low income and one-in-four women of reproductive age are uninsured.³ For many women, once they lose Pregnant Women's Medicaid, Children's Medicaid, or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage, they are unaware of HTW as a possible option.

This section of the bill directs HHSC to develop and implement strategies to ensure continuity of care for women transitioning from Medicaid to HTW. The current auto-enrollment process from Pregnant Women's Medicaid into HTW needs improvement. To make auto enrollment better, there should be more provider and client education surrounding the program's availability and services. TWHC recommends adding additional specifications for HHSC to also:

- Implement auto-enrollment for young women aging out of Children's Medicaid and CHIP into HTW.
- Or update the current notice sent to 19-year-old women aging out of Children's Medicaid and CHIP with language notifying them of potential HTW eligibility and where to apply.

3) Referral from the Healthy Texas Women Program to the Primary Health Care Services Program

³ CPPP analysis of 2016 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS.

This section of SB 750 directs HHSC to ensure women in HTW are referred to the Primary Health Care Services Program. However, the Primary Health Care Services Program provides similar services to those available in HTW and typically exhausts its annual funding serving its current population. TWHC staff has heard from HTW providers throughout the state that additional trainings are needed on the program as it currently stands. The Women's Health Programs have undergone major redesigns in the past few years. This change could cause confusion for providers. For women utilizing the program, it could mean enrolling in yet *another* new program with a similar array of services and reducing the quality of care. TWHC advises:

- Ensuring HTW is adequately funded to meet the need of Texas women and provide enhanced services to fulfill the intent of SB 750.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your strong support for women's preventive healthcare. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Evelyn Delgado". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Evelyn Delgado
Chair, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

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Texas Academy of Family Physicians
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
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Teaching Hospitals of Texas
Women's Health and Family Planning Association of Texas
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