



House Subcommittee on Disease Prevention and Women's and Children's Health
Testimony of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition
In Support of House Bill 1782
March 27, 2025

The **Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC)** is grateful for this opportunity to provide written and oral testimony in **support of House Bill 1782** by Representative Donna Howard. This bill expands eligibility criteria for Medicaid assistance for breast and cervical cancer treatment to individuals with family income at or below 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL).

TWHC is a group of 77 healthcare, faith, and community-based member organizations - 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.

In alignment with this mission, we wish to reiterate our **support for HB 1782 - as it would ensure access to vital breast and cervical cancer screenings and treatment for Texas' low-income and underserved women.** HB 1782 keeps not only Texas women healthy, but the babies and families they take care of as well.

Across Texas, breast and cervical cancers are some of the most commonly diagnosed cancers for women. According to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 225,082 Texas women are currently breast cancer survivors. These are women diagnosed with breast cancer between 1995-2020 who were alive as of January 1, 2021. Roughly 21,000 Texas women are estimated to have been diagnosed with breast cancer, and roughly 3,500 Texas women are estimated to have died from breast cancer in 2024.¹ Simultaneously, DSHS has estimated that Texas is currently home to 17,581 cervical cancer survivors. Roughly 1,400 Texas women are estimated to have been diagnosed with cervical cancer, and roughly 450 Texas women are estimated to have died from cervical cancer in 2024.²

While there is a clear need for breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment across all demographics of Texas women, access to this care is not as equitable. National research shows that women who are low-income, socially isolated and lack health insurance are far less likely to be

¹ "Female Breast Cancer in Texas." Cancer Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch (CESB), Texas Department of State Health Services, Mar. 2024, www.dshs.state.tx.us/sites/default/files/tcr/data/screening/2024-Female-Breast-Cancer-Data-Brief.pdf

² "Cervical Cancer in Texas." Cancer Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch (CESB), Texas Department of State Health Services, Aug. 2024, <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/tcr/data/screening/2024-Cervical-Cancer-Data-Brief.pdf>.



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up-to-date on mammograms compared to other groups.³ Approximately 1 in 4 women between the ages of 50 and 74 reported having not received a mammogram in the past 2 years in 2022, and women who reported cost as a barrier to access health care had about two times the odds of not getting a mammogram. Studies have also found that Black women, women who are uninsured, and women with low incomes are more likely to die from breast cancer. In fact only 7 in 10 women aged 50 to 74 years with three or more health-related social needs report being up to date with mammograms, compared to about 8 in 10 of those with no health-related social needs. While many factors contribute to these barriers in care, the cost of the care itself was found to be the greatest challenge for women.⁴

One of the main options low-income and underserved Texas women have in terms of pursuing breast and cervical cancer care is the Medicaid for Breast and Cervical Cancer (MBCC) Program, however in its current state this program has its limits. Women who are eligible for MBCC receive full Medicaid benefits including cancer treatments and reconstruction, yet in order to be eligible for the program they must have a household income at or below 200% of the FPL.⁵ This means a household of one in Texas must earn no more than \$31,000 per year to qualify for MBCC, and a household of four would have to earn no more than \$64,300. This income limit for MBCC needs to be raised, as it does not reflect the current state of poverty in Texas and prevents many low-income women who need the program from accessing it.

HB 1782 addresses this problem by raising the income limit for MBCC from no more than 200% of the FPL, to no more than 250% of the FPL. This would allow Texas to address the need for breast and cervical cancer care in our state, while also combatting the large barriers to care faced by low-income and underresourced Texas women.

Today, Texas has a significant number of women who fall into a healthcare coverage gap where their incomes are too high for them to be eligible for Medicaid, but too low to afford to buy a plan on the exchange. Because of the strict income limits for Medicaid in Texas, as many as 730,000 coverage gap adults live in Texas alone.⁶ Expanding the range of incomes accepted into MBCC considers recent

³ "Vital Signs: Mammography Use and Association with Social Determinants of Health and Health-Related Social Needs Among Women — United States, 2022." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 Apr. 2024, www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7315e1.htm?s_cid=mm7315e1_w.

⁴ Health-Related Social Needs Can Keep Women from Getting Lifesaving Mammograms, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 June 2024, www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/mammograms/index.html#:~:text=Women%20without%20health%20insurance%2C%20who%20had%20low,care%20were%20less%20likely%20to%20get%20mammograms.&text=Access%20to%20free%20or%20low%2Dcost%20breast%20and,Breast%20and%20Cervical%20Cancer%20Early%20Detection%20Program.

⁵ Medicaid for Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, Texas Health and Human Services, www.hhs.texas.gov/services/health/medicaid-chip/medicaid-chip-programs-services/medicaid-breast-cervical-cancer-program.

⁶ Who Are the Uninsured in Texas? - Dec. 2023, Texas 2036, 21 Dec. 2023, texas2036.org/uninsured/.



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nationwide concerns over rising inflation yet stagnant wages.⁷ There are many, many families of four across Texas who currently earn more than \$64,300 per year, yet do not make enough money to afford traditional health insurance coverage for the breast and cervical cancer services they need. HB 1782 would give MBCC the flexibility it needs to help these families.

TWHC is eager to help with these issues, and we are happy to provide any additional information on this topic.

Respectfully,

Rachel Wolleben
Policy Coordinator
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⁷ Cerullo, Megan. "Most U.S. Workers Say Their Pay Isn't Keeping up with Inflation." CBS News, CBS Interactive, 14 Sept. 2022, www.cbsnews.com/news/wages-not-keeping-up-with-inflation/.