



House Committee on Public Health
Testimony of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition
In Support of House Bill 44
April 7, 2025

The **Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC)** is grateful for this opportunity to provide written and oral testimony in **support of House Bill 44** by Representative Charlie Geren.

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.

TWHC believes that securing access to needed healthcare for mothers falls under our mission to support healthy women, pregnancies, and families. **Our members have been clear that the ambiguity of the current landscape is putting their patients at risk.**

A statewide survey conducted by Manatt Health found that 76% of practicing OBGYN physicians in Texas believe that they cannot practice medicine according to best practices or evidence-based medicine due to our current abortion laws. And 60% fear legal repercussions from practicing according to evidence-based medicine. According to the Manatt Health survey, 57% of resident physicians indicated that the Texas abortion laws were relevant to their decision about whether to stay or leave the state after residency and half of this group indicated that they are planning to leave the state in part due to the laws.¹ Texas physicians do not feel confident in their understanding of current Texas abortion prohibition exception laws. Nearly one in every three OBGYN physicians surveyed is unclear on the basics of Texas's abortion laws, and only 28% believe they have adequate support in navigating patients' questions and concerns.²

As a result, Texas has seen several cases of women experiencing health-threatening situations with imminent fetal demise or in the early stages of pregnancy loss, yet being unable to obtain medical treatment until their health declined to the point where their lives were on the line, or they lose their lives completely. This is tragic and unacceptable.

The Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) reported that Texas' maternal mortality rate (MMR) increased to 27.7 and 37.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, respectively,

¹ Morin, Alex, et al. The Texas OB/GYN Physician Workforce, Manatt Health, Oct. 2024.

² Morin, Alex, et al. The Texas OB/GYN Physician Workforce, Manatt Health, Oct. 2024.



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due in part to deaths related to COVID-19. If COVID-19 maternal deaths are excluded, the updated MMRs would be 24.2 per 100,000 live births in 2020 and 23.0 per 100,000 live births in 2021.³ In contrast, the nationwide maternal mortality rate for 2021 was 32.9.⁴ Among the pregnancy-related maternal death cases in Texas in 2020, infections were the most common underlying cause of pregnancy-related death (25%), followed by cardiovascular conditions (14%), and obstetric hemorrhage (14%). The majority of these pregnancy-related deaths in Texas were found to be preventable.⁵

There is a clear, urgent need for clarification and provider support in Texas' abortion laws, and we strongly support the intent of HB44 to provide this. Texas mothers, families, and physicians need action from the Legislature to reinforce that they can intervene in cases of pregnancy complications where the life or health of the mother is at risk. HB 44 states that a medical emergency does not need to be imminent or irreversible before a doctor can intervene, and that doctors are not required to delay, alter or withhold life-saving medical treatment. HB 44 would also support Texas' physicians by requiring the State Bar of Texas and Texas Medical Board to offer continuing education courses for lawyers and doctors to better educate them on interpreting and applying Texas laws.

While stakeholders on partisan sides may have different views on what the end goal for maternal healthcare should be in Texas, we hope that everyone can agree that changes need to be made to alleviate the current situation for Texas mothers.

Respectfully,
Rachel Wolleben
Policy Coordinator
Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

³ Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report 2024, Texas Health and Human Services, Sep. 2024.

⁴ Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023.

⁵ Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report 2024, Texas Health and Human Services, Sep. 2024.