



Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

PROMOTING ACCESS TO PREVENTIVE
HEALTHCARE FOR ALL TEXAS WOMEN

June 17, 2025

Texas Department of State Health Services
Maternal & Child Health
Via Email: TitleV@dshs.texas.gov

Re: Comments on FY24 Maternal Health Annual Report and FY26 Maternal Health Plan

On behalf of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the FY24 Maternal Health Annual Report and FY26 Maternal Health Plan. We appreciate the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) continued leadership in advancing maternal health through quality improvement and data transparency.

TWHC and its 75+ healthcare, faith, and community-based member organizations are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Texas women, babies, and families by improving access to preventive healthcare, including annual exams, cancer screenings, and contraception. Access to these services throughout a woman's reproductive years – including health screenings and contraception – contributes to healthy, planned pregnancies as well as early detection and treatment of cancers and other chronic conditions.

We strongly support TexasAIM as an evidence-based program that is reducing severe maternal morbidity, improving maternal health, and strengthening families across Texas. With more than 200 birthing hospitals enrolled, representing over 90 percent of birthing facilities in the state, TexasAIM is making measurable progress by implementing standardized safety bundles. These bundles address leading causes of maternal complications, including obstetric hemorrhage, severe hypertension, substance use disorders, and sepsis. They provide hospitals with essential tools such as clinical protocols, staff training, timely risk assessments, and coordinated care strategies to promote safer, more consistent, and equitable care.

During the 89th Legislature, the TWHC advocated to increase TexasAIM funding from approximately \$7 million to \$10 million to reflect the urgent need for sustained investment in maternal health. This funding can enhance hospital readiness, expand provider training, and support a shift toward a proactive, equitable, and data-driven system of care. With this increased investment from the state, we support the TexasAIM initiatives outlined in the FY26 Maternal Health Plan. These efforts are critical to further reducing severe maternal morbidity and improving outcomes statewide, particularly for populations most impacted by disparities, including Black women, rural communities, and low-income families.

The FY26 Maternal Health Plan sets necessary goals, including engaging 140 birthing hospitals, reducing severe maternal morbidity by 5 percent by 2030, and training 350 providers through instructor-led and on-demand continuing education courses offered by the Texas Perinatal Academy. These initiatives, particularly in rural and underserved areas, will help build a stronger maternal health workforce and a more resilient system of care. We also support the plan's continued focus on efforts such as the breastfeeding quality improvement program, strategies to increase postpartum follow-up visits, and the pilot of a congenital syphilis quality improvement toolkit for physicians and other providers. These targeted strategies are essential to advancing maternal and infant health across Texas.

We appreciate DSHS for its commitment to disaggregating TexasAIM data by race, ethnicity, and payer. This level of transparency is essential for identifying disparities, guiding targeted interventions, and supporting equitable program and policy development. Combined with the ongoing partnership through the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies, these efforts demonstrate a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving maternal health for all Texans.



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Access to Preventive Services

We recognize the FY24 efforts to raise awareness of the Healthy Texas Women (HTW) program through community health fairs in Northwest and South Texas. Nearly one in five women of childbearing age in Texas remain uninsured, making it critical to expand these efforts. For FY26, we recommend increasing outreach across all public health regions and ensuring that THSteps regional facilitators and Community Health Workers have accurate, up-to-date HTW information and enrollment guidance to share at community events.

Postpartum Care and Access

We support the FY26 Plan's emphasis on improving postpartum care through TexasAIM, including promotion of follow-up visits. With Medicaid covering half of all births in Texas, awareness of HB 12's 12-month postpartum coverage must be increased. Many providers remain unclear about key aspects of implementation, including eligibility, covered services, and provider responsibilities. This is especially important now that OB/GYNs can serve as primary care providers throughout the postpartum year. Clear, accessible guidance on care coordination is essential, especially for managing mental health needs and chronic conditions that often arise during the postpartum period.

To address these gaps, we recommend that DSHS collaborate with HHSC to develop a concise, user-friendly fact sheet outlining eligibility, covered services, care coordination roles, and referral pathways. Distributing this resource in clinics and community settings would promote clarity and improve access to timely, postpartum care.

We support continued breastfeeding promotion through the Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite program and expanded lactation education. Access to lactation support is especially important during the early postpartum period when challenges are most likely to arise. We also supported HB 136, which extends Medicaid coverage for lactation services beginning this fall. These efforts are key to closing care gaps and improving breastfeeding outcomes across Texas.

Addressing Maternal Morbidity Disparities

The FY26 Maternal Health Plan appropriately prioritizes the reduction of severe maternal morbidity among Black women. We are encouraged by the emphasis on respectful, patient-centered care and the inclusion of multidisciplinary teams that reflect cultural and linguistic needs. Expanding efforts like the Hear Her campaign and disaggregating TexasAIM data will help address persistent inequities and reduce preventable harms.

Lastly, we support DSHS's goal to reduce violent pregnancy-associated deaths by 5 percent by 2029, along with its broader efforts to prevent these tragedies through data-driven analysis, strengthened review processes, and collaboration with state agencies and nonprofit partners. The development of a statewide strategic action plan by FY26 is an important step toward reducing deaths among pregnant and postpartum women.

Thank you for your continued efforts to improve maternal health outcomes. If you have any questions or if we can provide further information, please contact me at dingram@healthyfutures-tx.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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