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# Health

Texas United Ways fight for the health and well-being of their communities while also recognizing that persistent disparities in health outcomes exist—outcomes that have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislative session, our network elevated critical community health issues, including access to health coverage and care, maternal and child health, mental and behavioral health, and social determinants of health. The legislature expanded access to telehealth, provided new moms a few more months of Medicaid coverage, reduced inefficiencies that mistakenly kick kids off Medicaid, and increased investments in mental health and substance use services. However, lawmakers also cut funding to the Health and Human Service Commission’s (HHSC) Eligibility and Enrollment division, which is responsible for helping individuals sign up for benefits, such as Medicaid. Additionally, the legislature failed to expand health coverage for low-wage workers, chose not to provide a full year of Medicaid coverage to new moms despite it being a recommendation of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Taskforce, did not increase investments in prevention and early intervention programs like Family Connects that are priorities to many United Ways, and did not support the reestablishment of a state health equity office to address health inequities in Texas.

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## Passed

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### Health Coverage

SB 1059 by Sen. Paxton	This bill requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to create an auto-renewal process for Medicaid for young people formerly in foster care, preventing any disruption in services, treatment, or medication after leaving foster care.
HB 133 by Rep. Rose	This bill extends Medicaid for women from 2 months to 6 months postpartum.
HB 290 by Rep. Cortez (passed as a provision of HB 2658)	This bill allows eligible children to remain enrolled in Medicaid insurance by reducing inaccurate mid-year eligibility reviews.
HB 1664 by Rep. White	This bill requires that Medicaid coverage be reinstated for a child in a juvenile facility during an inpatient stay at a medical facility.

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# Passed

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## Access to Care

SB 40 by Sen. Zaffirini

This bill authorizes health professionals regulated by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR), including speech-language pathologists and dyslexia therapists, to practice via telehealth.

SB 73 by Sen. Miles

This bill aims to reduce barriers to local health departments participating in the state Medicaid program by establishing a separate provider type for local health departments for billing purposes.

SB 672 by Sen. Buckingham

The bill makes collaborative care a Medicaid reimbursable service.

HB 4 by Rep. Price

This bill expands and makes permanent some pandemic-related telehealth and telemedicine changes, including reimbursement for audio-only behavioral health services.

HB 18 by Rep. Oliverson

This bill creates a state program to offer many prescription drugs at discounted rates to uninsured Texans.

HB 1307 by Rep. Gonzalez

This bill ensures that incarcerated pregnant women receive the health care services they need.

HB 1616 by Rep. Bonnen

The bill enacts the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, which streamlines the licensing process for physicians seeking to practice in multiple states.

*Key budget items include level funding for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) funding for toddlers with disabilities and a budget rider directing the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to identify unexpended Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) funding to establish a Health Services Initiative that can support CHIP outreach, enrollment, and prevention programs, including Family Connects.*

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# Passed

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## Mental Health and Behavioral Health

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| SB 64 by Sen. Nelson     | This bill requires the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) to develop a peer support network for law enforcement officers.  |
| SB 454 by Sen. Kolkhorst | This bill directs the continuation of the local mental health authority (LMHA) regional planning groups, which are focused on strengthening the delivery of mental health services to Texans and makes the planning process permanent.  |
| SB 640 by Sen. Menéndez  | This bill requires a study on the technological readiness and interoperability of behavioral health facilities' behavioral health technology to ensure providers can adequately provide critical care to patients.  |
| SB 642 by Sen. West      | This bill requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to adopt clear procedures and guidance for families at risk of relinquishing their parental rights to access mental health services for a child with severe emotional disturbance.   |
| HB 2595 by Rep. Price    | This bill strengthens mental health parity in Texas by requiring the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) to create an online portal for complaints by health plan enrollees regarding mental health parity. TDI must also develop additional educational materials and training on parity law for mental health conditions. Additionally, the bill designates October as Mental Health Condition and Substance Use Disorder Parity Awareness Month. |
| HB 3088 by Rep. Coleman  | This bill improves access to grant funding for counties helping veterans and individuals experiencing mental illness, homelessness, and substance use disorders.  |
| HB 3121 by Rep. Turner   | This bill creates a voluntary certification for long-term inpatient psychiatric facilities for youth.   |

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# Passed

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HB 3821 by Rep. Hunter

This bill requires the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and the Health and Human Services Committee (HHSC) to work together in the administration of mental health programs for veterans.

HB 4074 by Rep. Hunter

This bill requires the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (SBHCC) to create a subcommittee focused on suicide prevention and use data-informed suicide prevention strategies.

*Key budget items include \$8.4 billion in behavioral health funding across 25 state agencies, including a \$10 million increase in funding for the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium.*

## **Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Welfare, & Victim Support**

SB 225 by Sen. Paxton

This bill expands the searchable childcare database and increases transparency of violations and deficiencies of home-based childcare providers.

SB 263 by Rep. Menéndez

This bill provides financial support for grandparents and other kinship caregivers who are informally caring for a child at risk of entering foster care.

SB 452 by Sen. West

This bill would update statutory provisions relating to prevention and early intervention (PEI) services.

SB 476 by Sen. Nelson

This bill establishes county-level adult sexual assault response teams.

SB 904 by Sen. Perry

This bill requires certain attorneys to complete a training program on trauma-informed care and the impact of trauma on children in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

SB 910 by Sen. Schwertner

This bill requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to study and develop options for the integration of qualifying family prevention services into the state's community-based care (CBC) foster care model.

SB 957 by Sen. Zaffirini

This bill eliminates the requirement that victims must cooperate with law enforcement at the scene of a crime or while in the hospital to access funding through the Crimes Victims Compensation (CVC) program.

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# Passed

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SB 1575 by Sen. Kolkhorst

This bill seeks to align Texas with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and improve foster care placements for children in foster care with high needs.

SB 1896 by Sen. Kolkhorst

This bill makes changes to the community-based care (CBC) model regarding quality assurance of foster care placements, the expansion of CBC services, contracting practices, and the implementation of federal provisions, among other revisions to CBC.

HB 2633 by Rep. A. Johnson

This bill establishes a grant program to support victims of trafficking, including providing more support for housing and treatment programs.

HB 2706 by Rep. Howard

The bill expands services and care to sexual assault victims.

*Key budget items include level funding for home and community-based child abuse prevention programs, increased funding for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), additional funding through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for enhanced family violence services, and \$164.2 million in additional funds for Child Protective Services to maintain caseloads.*

## Other Health & Wellbeing

SB 25 by Sen. Kolkhorst

This bill allows long-term care residents to appoint one essential caregiver who cannot be prohibited from in-person visitation.

SB 248 by Sen. Johnson

This bill aims to curb e-cigarette use, especially among youth, by requiring electronic cigarette retailers to obtain permits to sell these products.

SB 271 by Sen. Perry

This bill enhances the requirements for criminal history checks of applicants seeking employment in licensed assisted living facilities.

HB 2831 by Rep. White

This bill establishes a permanent advisory committee that will advise the Texas Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS) and make recommendations in relation to the confinement of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) in county jails.