

# HEALTH

This legislative session, our network elevated critical community health issues, including maternal and child health, prevention and early intervention (PEI), mental and behavioral health, and social determinants of health. After many years of advocacy, the Legislature finally passed legislation that allows moms on Medicaid to keep their health coverage for 12 months after giving birth. HB 12 was signed by the Governor and will help combat our state's high maternal mortality and morbidity rates.

Unfortunately, the legislature failed to expand health coverage for low-wage workers, did not pass HB 1599, a priority bill that would have helped eligible but uninsured children enroll in health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP, and only partially funded the Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) budget request to support critical workforce needs of eligibility staff responsible for helping Texans sign up for benefits, such as Medicaid.

## Passed

### **Health Coverage & Access to Care**

SB 14 by Sen. Campbell bans all forms of gender-affirming care for minors, particularly puberty blockers.

SB 2193 by Sen. LaMantia establishes a pilot program to provide access to primary health services at federally qualified health centers to uninsured working Texans at small businesses.

HB 12 by Rep. Rose extends post-partum Medicaid coverage to 12 months.

HB 44 by Rep. Swanson prohibits Medicaid and CHIP providers from declining to serve a potential patient because of refusal or failure to obtain certain immunizations or vaccines and allows HHSC to deny reimbursement for and disenroll providers who violate this new statute.

HB 113 by Rep. Ortega would expand the use of Community Health Workers in Medicaid-managed care.

HB 400 by Rep. Klick establishes grant programs to support residency training programs in psychiatric specialty fields and recruitment, training, and retention programs in behavioral health fields.

HB 617 by Rep. Darby establishes a pilot project to provide emergency telemedicine medical services and telehealth services in rural areas.

HB 915 by Rep. Craddick establishes a 24-hour toll-free workplace violence hotline and requires employers to post information about the hotline.

# Passed

HB 1455 by Rep. Anchia makes spouses and dependents of exonerees also eligible to receive the same health benefits afforded to employees of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

HB 1575 by Rep. Hull requires HHSC to adopt standardized screening questions to identify and aggregate data on the nonmedical health-related needs of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid and the Alternatives to Abortion program.

HB 2727 by Rep. Price allows Medicaid reimbursement for home telemonitoring services for certain high-risk pregnancies, which can help a doctor and patient monitor blood pressure and other health measures while at home.

## **Pharmaceutical Costs and Prescription Access**

HB 916 by Ordaz requires health insurers that cover contraception to provide a year's supply of the medication at once.

HB 999 by Rep. Price requires health plans to apply rebates and copay assistance to reduce prescription drug cost-sharing for their beneficiaries.

HB 25 by Rep. Talarico creates a program to import prescription drugs from Canadian suppliers.

## **Mental Health & Behavioral Health**

SB 26 by Sen. Kolkhorst creates an innovation grant to expand access to mental health services for children and families, develops a Quality Incentive Payment Program for local mental health providers, and requires audits for Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) and Local Behavioral Health Authorities (LBHAs).

SB 63 by Zaffirini requires HHSC to create an instruction guide for families and caregivers of veterans with mental health conditions.

SB 532 by Sen. West reduces the years required for a person to participate in the Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals and requires public universities to share information about mental health services on campus.

SB 1319 by Sen. Huffman requires local health authorities to report overdose information to an entity that maps overdoses.

SB 1677 by Sen. Schwertner provides for counties under 250,000 the opportunity to apply for Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) assistance for jail-based competency restoration, jail diversion, mental health services, and adolescent behavioral health services.

# Passed

HB 671 by Rep. Gonzalez creates a statewide veteran suicide prevention campaign and establishes a website to instruct veterans about safely storing firearms.

HB 1357 by Rep. Holland permanently allows our state Medicaid program to provide reimbursement for medication-assisted opioid or substance abuse treatment.

HB 2059 by Rep. Price expands the eligibility of individuals who can participate in the state's mental health first aid training program, including youth, first responders, and military service members and veterans who want to participate.

HB 2100 by Rep. Price extends eligibility for loan repayment assistance to mental health professionals who provide services to patients in a state hospital or individuals receiving community-based mental health services from a local mental health authority (LMHA).

## **Prevention & Early Intervention**

SB 24 by Kolkhorst moves Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) to HHSC and codifies the "Alternatives to Abortion (A2A)" program renaming it the "Texas Pregnancy and Parenting Support Network".

SB 222 by Sen. Nichols grants paid parental leave for state employees.

HB 63 by Rep. Swanson eliminates anonymous reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.

## **Child Protection and Juvenile Justice**

SB1447 by Sen. Miles requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to develop an improved training program to increase the quality of investigations.

SB 1727 by Senator Schwertner continues the functions of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) for two more years, setting up another Sunset review for the next legislative session in 2025, and making additional juvenile justice policy changes.

SB 1930 by Sen. Kolkhorst requires Judges, Guardians ad Litem, and Attorneys ad Litem to review placements in residential settings.

SB 2120 by Sen. Zaffirini requires the Texas Indigent Defense Commission to provide legal representation and services to indigent parents or children named in a suit filed by DFPS.

SB 1849 by Sen. Kolkhorst creates a single search engine that links the "do not hire" registries of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

# Passed

HB 968 by Rep. Gates provides a parent or caregiver accused of abuse or neglect the option to voluntarily remove themselves from the home instead of the child's removal.

HB 1087 by Rep. Hull requires DFPS to include affidavits describing reasonable efforts made to prevent child removal in filed petitions and prohibits courts from terminating parental rights at the end of the trial if reasonable efforts are lacking.

HB 1819 by Rep. Cook abolishes a local government's ability to enact a curfew ordinance that targets youth.

HB 3186 by Rep. Leach makes diversion strategies more effective by providing for the referral of youth charged with fine-only offenses to diversion strategies.

HB 3765 by Rep. Bucy requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to maintain and distribute a supply of luggage for use when transporting the personal belongings of children in foster care and to maintain a record of each time a trash bag instead of luggage.

HB 4233 by Rep. Zweiner provides training and guidance for runaway prevention for foster and adoptive parents of children and youth aged ten and older.

## **Family Violence, Victim Support & Human Trafficking**

SB 49 by Sen. Zaffirini ensures that victims' compensation covers relocation costs for all survivors, increases the cap on the amount a survivor receives, and expands eligibility to household members of victims.

SB 855 by Sen. Alvarado requires certain judges to receive training on family violence.

SB 2429 by Sen. Hancock establishes new training requirements and procedures for investigating missing child cases.

HB 2313 by Rep. Thompson requires rideshare companies to annually provide their drivers with digital human trafficking awareness and prevention training materials.

HB 2660 by Rep. Oliverson requires law enforcement agencies to send missing person reports electronically no later than 48 hours after receiving the initial report and to each municipal and county law enforcement agency within 200 miles.

# Passed

## Other Health & Wellbeing

SB 29 by Sen. Birdwell prohibits governmental entity implementation or enforcement of a vaccine mandate, mask requirement, or private business or school closure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

SB 490 by Sen. Hughes requires that a medical provider send an itemized bill before attempting to collect any money from the patient.

SB 2476 by Sen. Zaffirini adds ambulances to Texas' surprise billing standards.

HB 852 by Rep. Thierry expands and amends the composition of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee.

HB 568 by Rep. Bowers requires peace officers to receive specialized training on communication with persons with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

HB 59 by Rep. Goodwin requires childcare organizations to obtain a written notice from parents stating whether their children can swim and to place and fasten a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket on children who cannot swim and are likely to enter a body of water during an activity organized by the childcare organization.

*Key Budget Items for Coverage and Access: additional \$113 million to support the increased workload of eligibility workers due to the unwinding of continuous Medicaid coverage; \$178.2 million for rural hospitals; and \$1.95 billion to raise the base wage for home healthcare workers.*

*Key Budget Items for Mental & Behavioral Health: \$280 million for the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium; \$302 million for mental health community hospitals; \$8 million increase for youth mobile crisis outreach; \$15 million to expand access to mental health services for children and families statewide; and \$1.6 billion for the construction of a new mental health state hospital.*

*Key Budget Items for Child Welfare: additional funding for "rate modernization" to provide a 12-20 percent pay increase to foster care providers; \$7 million in general revenue to support kinship caregivers; and an additional \$65 million for Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs.*