

**April 19, 2021**

**Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Phelan, and Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature:**

Our organizations represent a broad range of employers, physicians and health care providers, county officials, social service entities, and policy advocates and experts. We come together here to ask you to support increased health coverage for Texans. We specifically support a coverage initiative that is bipartisan, funded through available federal dollars, structured to be neutral for the state's budget, and designed to meet Texas' specific needs, values, and circumstances.

We write to you with urgency, with only a few weeks left in the legislative session, because we believe this issue can no longer wait. The passage of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) means billions more dollars are available to Texas right now for expanded health coverage. According to recently released estimates from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Texas will be eligible for \$3.9 billion more over two years, in addition to the increase in federal matching funds available through the remainder of the public health emergency. These dollars are in addition to ongoing enhanced federal matching dollars that provide a 9-to-1 return for Texans.

It is imperative that the Texas legislature and leadership act now to capture this additional funding. Texans cannot wait. Many continue to reel from the ongoing health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Extending coverage to them will clearly demonstrate Texas' commitment to economic freedom and security. Access to coverage keeps hard-working people healthy and on the job; it supports entrepreneurs' efforts to start new businesses; and it protects Texans from serious financial challenges — compared to the national average, Texans are more likely than other Americans to have medical debt in collections (23% compared to 15%).

Accessing federal funds now will bring billions of vital dollars into the state budget and economy.

A range of projections by Texas researchers shows that the state can implement a budget-neutral coverage option or even save money by increasing coverage. Moreover, as pointed out in the recent letter from the Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce — the eight largest chambers of commerce in the state, representing regions with more than 20 million Texans combined — increased coverage would reduce uncompensated health care costs for local governments.

To remain competitive in the global economy, Texas simply cannot afford to rank dead last in both the number and percentage of people without health coverage. More than 1-in-5 Texans lack health insurance today, creating a huge drag on our economy and our health system. According to the [National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine](#), “It is both mistaken and dangerous to assume the persistence of a sizable uninsured population ... harms only those who are uninsured.” All Texans pay the price.

Greater health coverage also represents a lifeline for Texas’ rural communities, which have uninsured rates that far exceed urban areas. This undermines the financial stability of rural hospitals, physicians, and providers. Since 2013, at least two dozen Texas hospitals have closed in part because of high uncompensated care costs.

And access to health care coverage would help tens of thousands of essential workers who have helped get Texas through the pandemic, but whose jobs often do not come with health insurance. Further, a variety of public surveys point to widespread, bipartisan support for increased federally funded health coverage.

Texans deserve better health and access to health care — which requires health coverage. Thirty-eight other states have already expanded health care coverage. We urge you to work with other state leaders and lawmakers and our organizations this year to pass a Texas-specific solution that will insure as many Texans as possible, bring federal dollars back to Texas, bolster rural and urban economies, protect the financial viability of rural and urban health care safety-net systems, and put money into the state budget.

Thank you for your service and timely consideration on this important issue. With your leadership, we feel confident Texas can adopt a plan in short order that is rooted in Texas’ values, sustains Texas’ economic vitality, and promotes prosperity and good health among all Texans.

Sincerely,

**Statewide Physician and Provider Associations/Groups**

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists District XI (Texas)  
Doctors for America, Texas Chapter  
Texas Association of Neurological Surgeons  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Texas Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Society  
Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
Texas Association of Community Health Centers  
Texas Association of Community Health Plans  
Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians Services  
Texas College of Emergency Physicians  
Texas Doctors for Social Responsibility  
Texas Society for Gastroenterology and Endoscopy  
Texas Health Care Association  
Texas Medical Association  
Texas Neurological Society  
Texas Nurses Association  
Texas Ophthalmological Association  
Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH)  
Texas Orthopaedic Association  
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association  
Texas Association of Otolaryngology  
Texas Pediatric Society  
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Texas PMR Society  
Texas Primary Care Consortium  
Texas Radiological Society

### **Local Officials**

Bastrop County  
City of San Antonio  
Conference of Urban Counties  
County of Bexar  
Gregg County Extension Office  
Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis  
Harris County Commissioners Court  
Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo  
Hutchinson County  
North Texas Commission  
Office of El Paso County Commissioner David C. Stout  
Office of the County Judge - Bastrop County  
Office of the County Judge - Dallas County

## **Chambers of Commerce**

Greater Arlington Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce  
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce  
North Dallas Chamber of Commerce  
San Antonio Chamber of Commerce  
The Longview Chamber of Commerce  
United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce

## **Statewide Organizations**

AARP Texas  
American Heart Association  
Autism Society of Texas  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Diabetes Association  
Bridging Medical Gaps Collaboration  
Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement  
Children at Risk  
Children's Defense Fund - Texas  
Circle Up United Methodist Women for Moms  
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities  
Cover Texas Nowevery  
Episcopal Health Foundation  
Every Body Texas  
Every Texan (formally CPPP)  
Feeding Texas  
Jolt Action  
La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)  
League of Women Voters of Texas  
Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.  
Mi Familia Vota  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Sueños Sin Fronteras de Tejas (SSFTX)  
Texans Care for Children  
Texas 2036

Texas AFL-CIO  
Texas Alliance for Retired Americans-President Anthony Padilla  
Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
Texas Data Quality Coalition  
Texas Health Institute  
Texas Impact  
Texas Latino Policy Symposium  
Texas Medical Home Initiative  
Texas Organizing Project  
Texas Parent to Parent  
Texas State Alliance of YMCAs  
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry  
TexProtects  
THAAT Ranch  
The Afiya Center  
The Arc of Texas  
The Salvation Army  
The Texas Patient Safety Initiative  
TX Grandparents Raising Grandchildren  
UnidosUS  
United Ways of Texas  
Young Invincibles

### **Local Organizations**

AccelHealth  
Access Esperanza Clinics Inc.  
AccessHealth  
Andrews Center  
Any Baby Can  
Asian American Health Coalition dba HOPE Clinic  
Bee Busy Wellness Center  
Bexar County Medical Society  
Center for Health Care Services  
Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe  
Centro San Vicente  
Central Texas Interfaith  
Change Happens  
CitySquare  
Clarity Child Guidance Center

CommuniCare Health Centers  
Community Health Centers of South Central Texas  
Community Family Centers  
Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions  
Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council  
Dillon Joyce Ltd  
Doctors for Change  
Dominican Sisters of Houston  
East Texas Human Needs Network  
Educate Midland  
El Centro del Barrio, DBA CentroMed  
El Paso Community Action Program Project BRAVO, Inc.  
Faith Commons  
Family Service  
Family to Family Network  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston  
Foundation Communities  
Gateway Community Health Center, Inc.  
Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest  
Good Life Outcomes (GLO) Program at Change Happens  
Gulf Coast Adapt  
Gulf Coast Council of La Raza, Inc.  
Gulf Coast Health Center, Inc.  
Health Services of North Texas  
Heart of Texas Community Health Center  
Henderson Interchurch Ministry  
Hope Family Health Center  
Houston Area Women's Center  
Houston Food Bank  
International Valley Health Institute  
Jefferson County Medical Society  
Jewish Family Service Austin  
Jewish Family Service of Dallas  
Jewish Family Service Houston  
La Esperanza Clinic  
Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic  
Mission East Dallas and Metroplex Project  
NAMI Central Texas  
NAMI El Paso  
NAMI San Antonio

NAMI Temple Area  
NAMI Texas of Palestine  
New Hope Housing  
North Texas Area Community Health Center  
Panhandle Community Services  
Pasadena Health Center  
Paso del Norte Center of Hope  
PediPlace  
People's Community Clinic  
Project Vida Health Center  
Prosper Waco  
Proyecto Azteca  
ResourceCare  
Smith County Behavioral Health Leadership Team  
Southeast Texas Faith and Community Leaders  
Southern Dallas Progress Community Development Corporation  
Special Health Resources  
Stephen F Austin Community Health Center  
Su Clinica  
Tahirih Justice Center (Houston)  
Temple Emanu-El Dallas  
The Metropolitan Organization of Houston (TMO)  
The Tyler Loop  
Travis County Medical Society  
True Vine Baptist Church  
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas  
United Way of Southern Cameron County  
United Way of Tarrant County  
University Health  
Valley AIDS Council  
Valley Interfaith  
Vecino Health Centers  
Vickery Meadow Youth Development Foundation  
Voices for Children of San Antonio  
Waco Family Medicine Institute  
Wellness Pointe  
Your Health Clinic dba Callie Clinic