

Methodist Healthcare Ministries' public policy agenda and advocacy efforts are guided by the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. We believe all Texans deserve access to quality health care, regardless of their ability to pay. Guided by its mission of "Serving Humanity to Honor God," our vision is to be the leader for improving wellness of the least served. This public policy agenda empowers Texas policymakers to establish a state where everyone is healthy – mind, body and spirit.

Access to Care

Medicaid Expansion

- Secure access to affordable healthcare coverage for an estimated two million uninsured, low-income, adult Texans.

1115 Texas Medicaid Transformation Waiver

- Extend the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program with \$2.49 billion in continued funding for the final demonstration year of the current 1115 Healthcare Transformation Waiver.

Children's Health



- Implement 12-months of continuous coverage for children enrolled in Medicaid.
- Invest in greater Medicaid-CHIP outreach and enrollment assistance to maximize the number of children eligible for coverage.
- Improve access to mental health crisis prevention services and create awareness and education around trauma informed care.
- Ensure sufficient staffing levels to process applications and reduce the significant backlog and delay in Medicaid and SNAP applications. Oppose the elimination of an estimated 741 eligibility worker positions included as part of HHSC's five percent budget reductions.

Women's Health



- Extend coverage for pregnant women on Medicaid from 60 days to one-year post-partum.
- Improve the implementation of the 1115 Healthy Texas Women

(HTW) Waiver program, advocating against the termination of three crucial policies: auto-enrollment, adjunctive eligibility, and the simplified application form.

Immunizations



- Protect immunization policies and invest in initiatives that educate the public about the importance of community immunity.

- Create an automatic opt-in for families to participate in the Texas Immunization Registry (ImmTrac2) data system.
- Support state budget funding for flu vaccines for uninsured adults.

Healthcare Workforce

- Support continue funding for the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Program to ensure a ratio of 1.1 to 1 is sustained.
- Continue funding for the Nursing Shortage Reduction Program.
- Remove outdated physician delegation barriers to Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to increase access to quality health care for Texans in underserved rural areas.

Health Literacy



- Direct the HHSC Statewide Health Coordinating Council to form an advisory committee on health literacy and develop a long-range plan to promote the capacity of individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Public Health

- Support funding for local immunization programs.
- Support funding to update local public health technology systems and data programs.
- Oppose any budget cuts that would negatively impact public health infrastructure's response to pandemic and natural disaster crises.

Behavioral Health



San Antonio State Hospital

- Secure the remaining \$152.4M needed to complete the reconstruction of a new San Antonio State Hospital that serves families in 54 South Texas counties.
- Develop a SASH master plan to secure stepdown housing and specialty support services that will provide continuity of care for SASH patients and families.
- Increase funding to provide competitive salaries for state hospital nurses and support staff.

Behavioral Health

- Support the HHSC's Behavioral Health Advisory Committee recommendations that include the promotion of cross-agency coordination, state/local and public/private partnerships in the funding and delivery of behavioral health services.
- Promote data-driven decision-making and the integration of mental health and substance use disorder services in prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services and supports.
- Sustain funding for the Community Mental Health Grant programs that support public/private partnerships and allow for local community solutions.
- Support increased funding for local clubhouse programs
- Support continued eligibility and funding for Haven for Hope through the Healthy Community Collaborative program which promotes collaboration between public and private sectors to integrate services for people experiencing homelessness and mental illness and substance use disorders.

Telehealth & Telemedicine Services



- Secure permanent implementation of the public health emergency waivers and regulation flexibilities to continue access to care coverage via telehealth, telemedicine and telephone platforms.
- Address telehealth parity issues that address loopholes in the state Medicaid program to ensure equal payment for mental health and substance abuse services.

Broadband



- Support the recommendations of the Governor's Broadband Development Council to establish a state broadband office and create a state broadband plan to secure federal funding for statewide data infrastructure collection and incentivize deployment in underserved areas.
- Support funding for the Texas Education Agency to provide the necessary electronic tools and equipment for students lacking access to internet services. Support the development of public/private partnerships to leverage public assets and create neighborhood access for low-income families.

Food Security



- Create innovative public-private partnerships to provide incentives for the redevelopment and expansion of fresh and healthy food retail outlets that are sustainably self-sufficient.
- Prioritize disaster preparedness measures to better support local food banks during COVID-19 and other future disasters.

Housing



- Eliminate outdated public policies that create economic segregation and class divides.
- Prioritize the creation of inclusive affordable housing opportunities in metro areas and rural neighborhoods.
- Develop oversight and accountability measures for private corporations who receive tax breaks with public funds.

Water



- Support funding needed to complete water infrastructure projects identified by the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) to ensure residents in the state's rural, underserved and colonia areas have access to clean water, necessary to weather the ongoing pandemic and other emergency disasters.
- Prevent the illegal dumping of waste and hazardous materials contrary to public health and safety.