



House Select Committee on Health Care Reform

HB 1599: Relating to implementation of an express lane option for determining eligibility and enrolling certain individuals in Medicaid or the child health plan program.

March 16, 2023

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Chair Harless and members of the House Select Committee on Health Care Reform:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today in support of House Bill 1599 by Representative Bucy concerning the use of already-verified information to facilitate health coverage enrollment for eligible children. Respectfully, we offer the following points for the committee's consideration to simplify the Medicaid and CHIP eligibility process and improve healthcare access for children in Texas.

Address the High Uninsured Rate of Children in Texas: Texas currently has the nation's highest rate of uninsured children, with nearly one million children lacking health coverage.ⁱ Aggravating this situation is the fact that only 84.5% of eligible children in Texasⁱⁱ are actually enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP, largely due to the complex eligibility process and unintended administrative barriers. Streamlining the eligibility process would improve access to care for nearly 400,000 eligible children currently without coverage.

Build on the Success of the Express Lane Eligibility Initiative: The Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) initiative, established by the CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CIPRA), has been successfully implemented in states, including Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina.ⁱⁱⁱ These states have leveraged data already verified from one program (e.g., SNAP, Head Start, WIC, National School Lunch Program) to enroll eligible children into health care coverage. The results demonstrate more efficient enrollment processes, reduced administrative burdens and increased healthcare access.

Optimize Efficiency and Cost Savings for HHSC: A 2013 Mathematica study on South Carolina's implementation of ELE found that its adoption decreased the number of state employees needed to process paperwork, lowered program costs, and reduced unnecessary loss of children's health coverage each year, ultimately saving the state \$1.6 million annually.^{iv} By allowing the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to use already-verified information from other state programs, the level of redundant paperwork will be reduced, saving time and resources for both the state and families.

Anticipate the Unwinding of Medicaid Continuous Coverage: In response to the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act passed by Congress in 2022, which separated the Medicaid coverage requirement from the federal public health emergency, states are now required to conduct a comprehensive redetermination process. Beginning April 1, 2023, the State will have

a 12-month period to renew nearly 5.9 million Texans currently enrolled in the Medicaid and CHIP programs.^v To successfully maneuver the timely redetermination process, it is crucial that Texas have a seamless enrollment and renewal system, one that will avoid delays confirming eligibility and delivering care.

RECOMMENDATION:

Texas should follow the example of other states by implementing the express lane enrollment option outlined in HB 1599. By utilizing already-verified information to facilitate health coverage enrollment for currently eligible children, Texas can reduce administrative inefficiencies, minimize potential delays in confirming child eligibility, and improve access to healthcare for thousands of children and families. The passage of HB 1599 would have a significant impact on the health and well-being of children in Texas, helping ensure that all eligible children have access to the healthcare they need and deserve.

For additional information, please contact Christine Yanas, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy at (210) 253-3253 or at cyanas@mhm.org.

ⁱ Texans Care for Children. [Ensuring Eligible Texas Kids Can Enroll in Health Coverage and Stay Covered](#). July 2022

ⁱⁱ Urban Institute. [Uninsurance Rose among Children and Parents in 2019](#). July 2021

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. [Express Lane Eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP Coverage](#). August 2021

^{iv} Mathematica Policy Research. [Case Study of South Carolina's Express Lane Eligibility](#). December 2013

^v Texas Health and Human Services. [Presentation to the House Select Committee on Health Care Reform](#). March 8, 2023