

Women's Council OF DALLAS COUNTY

WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF DALLAS COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COALITION

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES for 83rd STATE LEGISLATURE

SUPPORT MEDICAID EXPANSION IN TEXAS AND MAINTAIN CURRENT MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT RATES:

The latest census shows that 6.1 million Texans were uninsured in 2011 including 1.2 million children under 19. Texas predicts that with moderate enrollment success, insurance gains under ACA would cut Texas' uninsured in half (approximately 3 million). Without that expansion, our uninsured rate would leave 4,358,033 uninsured, or 17.3%. The state's cost for the adult Medicaid expansion totals \$1.3 billion GR, drawing down another \$25.3 billion in federal match. Medicaid expenditures lead to substantial economic activity, federal funds inflow, reduction in the costs of uncompensated care and insurance, and enhanced productivity from a healthier population. If Texas does not expand Medicaid coverage, the uninsured will continue using expensive hospital emergency rooms. Current funding levels for Medicaid should not be cut. We cannot risk losing more doctors who accept Medicaid patients or the closing of skilled nursing facilities.

INCREASE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION:

The Texas Legislature should restore the \$5.4 billion cut from public education funding in the last biennium and increase funding to cover population growth in the public school population. Public schools need these resources to prepare students for jobs that pay a living wage and provide them with skills to compete in a technology based workplace. Today's students also need learning skills to attain and upgrade job certifications to compete in future job markets. Cutting funds for public schools increases the dropout rate. People who don't graduate from high school face a lifetime of limited earnings and are more likely to be incarcerated. For a strong Texas where jobs are plentiful and industry and commerce thrive, funding for public education must be increased.

FUND ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO ALLEVIATE FOOD INSECURITY:

Texas is in the top eight states for food insecure households. It is critical that state leaders support policies that allow vulnerable populations access to nutritious food. For seniors, the Legislature should fully fund the Department of Agriculture's home delivered meals program at \$18 million. For children, the Legislature should implement school breakfast programs for schools where at least 80% of students are on free or reduced lunch. For low income families, the Legislature should ensure resources for an effective SNAP eligibility system as well as funding for SNAP application assistance and outreach activities. The unnecessary SNAP asset test should be removed.

FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS:

Texas ranks at the bottom of all states in mental health funding. Jails and prisons are still the main providers of behavioral health care and many in need are homeless, wandering the streets and using expensive emergency room care for crises. Community based services have demonstrated their effectiveness. It costs about \$137 per prison inmate per day, compared with about \$12 per patient per day for community based care. Texas economist Ray Perryman estimates that Texas receives a return on investment of \$23 for every \$1 spent. Funding should be restored to 2009 levels, with increases for population growth.

FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

In 2011, the Texas Legislature cut funding for the Community Youth Development Program (CYD) by 36%. The CYD Program prevents youth ages 8-18 from arrest at a cost of \$500 per youth per year. If these youth don't have the benefit of the CYD non-school hour programs and get arrested, it costs \$61,000 per child and they have a juvenile crime record the rest of their lives. The CYD has proven successful in promoting the development of children who stay out of gangs, stay in school and become self-sufficient adults. In the Dallas area, the CYD has served 1200 youth each year for fourteen years (16,800 children) and only 3 have been arrested! The program operates in zip codes with the highest juvenile crime rates. Full funding should be restored.

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