

Harris County



Precinct One

RODNEY ELLIS
Commissioner

AGENDA ITEM

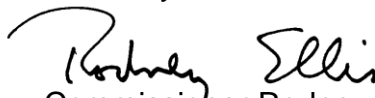
April 27, 2021

County Judge Lina Hidalgo
Members of Commissioners Court

RE: Resolution on Expansion of Healthcare Coverage

Precinct 1 requests approval of a resolution in support of the Texas Legislature expanding healthcare coverage for Texans.

Sincerely,


Commissioner Rodney Ellis

RE: NM

xc: Brandon Dudley



Resolution

WHEREAS, Among the 50 states, Texas has the highest number and percentage of uninsured citizens. About 5 million Texans, or nearly 1 in 5, are without health insurance, according to the U.S. Census.

WHEREAS, Texas has the largest coverage gap in the country. Approximately 1.6 million of the uninsured fall into the ‘expansion gap’, earning too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to qualify for federal insurance subsidies.

WHEREAS, Harris County has one of the highest percentages of uninsured individuals in the nation. Harris County's uninsured rate is 22 percent, twice the national average of 11 percent.

WHEREAS, race and ethnic disparities in insurance rates contribute to health inequities. In 2018, Hispanic working-aged Texans were more than twice as likely as non-Hispanic white working-aged Texans to be uninsured, with Black Texas adults about 1.5 times as likely to be uninsured compared to non-Hispanic Whites.

WHEREAS, families suffer the most under the current Medicaid qualifications. Parents are only eligible if their dependent children are enrolled in Medicaid and if the household income doesn’t exceed \$251 per month, or about 15% of the federal poverty level for a family of four.

WHEREAS, nearly one in four uninsured children in the U.S. live in Texas. In Harris County, 15 percent of children do not have health insurance, compared to about 12 percent of children in Texas and 5.7 percent nationally.

WHEREAS, lack of health insurance makes it harder for Texans to get appropriate medical care and to weather the financial strains of losing a job. People who could qualify for Medicaid under expansion are essential workers in grocery stores, restaurants, and warehouses who have worked through the pandemic, but whose jobs often do not come with health insurance.

WHEREAS, not funding healthcare sacrifices larger, long-term savings for short-term budget cuts. According to Texas Hospital Association, the cost of caring for uninsured patients in Texas hospitals is more than \$7 billion a year. Since 2013, at least two dozen Texas hospitals have closed in part because of high uncompensated care costs.

WHEREAS, expanding Medicaid reclaims tax dollars paid to the federal government by Texans and alleviates the need to use local property taxes to fund healthcare. The economic benefits of expansion would generate cost savings and estimated incremental tax receipts of over \$19.5 billion to the State and more than \$16.8 billion to local governments during the first 10 years after implementation.

WHEREAS, it is cost-effective to expand health insurance coverage in addition to being a moral imperative. Research shows that when people have insurance, they are healthier and less likely to die prematurely. Many healthcare services — such as eye exams, chronic disease care, or cancer treatments — are often available only to those with insurance. Uninsured individuals typically wait longer to seek medical care, which leads to more expensive treatments and higher costs for taxpayers.

WHEREAS, full recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic requires the financial and physical security that comes with health insurance. Access to health care without the fear of insurmountable medical debt provides the health and financial safety that Texans need to return to work safely.

WHEREAS, the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act has significantly incentivized expansion activities. 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.

WHEREAS, more than a dozen bills were filed during the 87th Legislature related to Medicaid expansion, and two (SB 117 and HB 3871) have strong bipartisan support. An estimated 1.4 million uninsured low-wage Texans would become eligible for health insurance, and expansion would bring over \$5 billion annually to the state.

THEREFORE, Texas can no longer wait to expand healthcare coverage for all Texans.

BE IT RESOLVED, Harris County requests the Texas state legislature pass legislation to expand health care coverage that is affordable, comprehensive, funded through federal dollars, and designed to be budget neutral.

ADOPTED on this 27th day of April 2021 by Harris County Commissioners Court, Harris County, Texas.

LINA HIDALGO, County Judge

RODNEY ELLIS, Commissioner
Precinct One

ADRIAN GARCIA, Commissioner
Precinct Two

TOM S. RAMSEY, P.E., Commissioner
Precinct Three

R. JACK CAGLE, Commissioner
Precinct Four

ATTEST:

Teneshia Hudspeth, County Clerk
Harris County, T E X A S