

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2333

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 31, 2021 8:00 AM

Debra Decker, Mrs.

Self

Dallas, TX

When I was on the Dallas Commission on Children and Youth and the Dallas County Juvenile Board many years back, I recognized the need for prevention and early intervention practices to save not only Texas children but also Texans' money. With HB 2333, Texas can invest in programs that can cost-effectively reduce child maltreatment and thereby save the state money even in the short term, given emergency room and investigation costs of child abuse and neglect. Long-term savings also accrue from reduced juvenile delinquency and special education interventions and from increased educational attainment and productivity. I hope that you all will see fit to pass this bill unanimously.

Adriana Kohler

Texans Care for Children

Austin, TX

We support HB 2333. The birth of a child is a big change, and every family could use support when a new baby comes home. Unfortunately, Texas lacks a streamlined system of care and services to support new parents and infants, resulting in families having to navigate multiple disconnected systems to access services including healthcare, childcare, developmental screenings and referrals, parent education, behavioral health, and access to basic needs. Without a streamlined system, this can lead to extra emergency room visits, maternal deaths and pregnancy complications that could have been treated, and inefficient use of available resources.

Brain science is clear that the experiences of babies and toddlers during the first few years of childhood have a huge influence on the rest of their lives. But it's often not until young children reach school that they and their families are connected to official channels of support.

Programs that connect families with newborns to local services have emerged as a vital solution to current gaps. One example is Family Connects, which is an evidence-based model that uses short-term nurse home visits to bring together families, health providers, and communities to improve maternal and child health. These voluntary baby and family check-ins (whether at home or virtually) are opportunities for parents to ask questions about feeding and safe sleep, provide health screenings for mom and baby, and for parents to learn about and be connected to other local services -- resources they might not otherwise know exist.

Short-term nurse visits save money and make existing services more efficient and effective. In 2019, Family Connects served 1,239 families in five Texas counties. Research shows that through the use of short-term nurse home visiting for newborns: Infants had 50% fewer emergency room visits and hospital overnight stays in the first year of life; Substantiated cases of child maltreatment were reduced by 44%; Mothers were more likely to complete their six-week postpartum health checkups; Mothers were 28% less likely to report clinical anxiety.

Family Connects has been shown to save \$3.17 for every \$1 spent in reduced emergency room costs alone. At an average of \$600/birth, an investment of \$23.6 to \$35.1 million could help scale the program in existing hospitals plus cover an additional 25% of births in operating counties, growing the program from 1,239 births to between 34,946 and 50,820 families respectively, if funded over two years.

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Family Connects is currently only available in 5 Texas counties. This bill creates a mechanism for scale-up and expansion by enabling philanthropy, federal, and state investments to be better utilized and transformed into a competitive grants program -- ultimately allowing more Texas families to be served.

Madeline McClure, Founder

TexProtects

Dallas, TX

This particular program has one of the highest probabilities of being a game changer for the health and well-being of Texas families now and in the long-term, not seen since the launch of the Nurse-Family Partnership program. With HB 2333, Texas had an opportunity to bring critical support services to all new Texas mothers and their children who accept services while saving state costs. The Randomized Controlled Trials by Duke University over decades showed a 44% decrease in child maltreatment among families engaged in one of this bill's beneficiaries, the Family Connects Program. That alone is reason enough to support this bill. Family Connects has also shown to reduce ER visits by 50% and yields a \$3.17 return for every \$1.00 invested in saved ER visits alone. Those savings directly flow back into cost savings for Texans in reduced property taxes from local hospital unreimbursed costs and insurance premium reductions. I wholeheartedly support unanimous approval of this legislation. Thanks to Rep. Donna Howard for carrying through this important bill over the finish line. Madeline McClure, Founder, TexProtects 214-770-7624

Leslie DeCillis

Self attorney

Dallas, TX

This bill creates a competitive grant program at the Health and Human Services Commission that will be able to accept funds from multiple sources and distribute them to community providers for the expansion of family and newborn support networks.

Texas currently lacks a streamlined system of care and services to support mothers and infants postpartum, resulting in families having to navigate multiple disconnected systems to access services including healthcare, childcare, developmental screenings and referrals, parent education, behavioral health, and access to basic needs. This results in unnecessary traumas resulting from child abuse/neglect, maternal mortality, and morbidity, and emergency room visits as well as inefficient use of and access to available resources.

Strategies like Family Connects provide short-term nurse home visits to bring together families, healthcare providers, and communities to improve maternal and child health and wellbeing.

To decrease maternal morbidity and mortality and ensure children have strong health outcomes supported by early intervention, TexProtects proposes scaling Family Connects in existing communities operating the program. In 2019, 1,239 families were served in five Texas counties. At an average of \$600/birth, an investment of \$23.6M—\$35.1M could help scale the program in existing hospital sites plus cover an additional 25% of births in operating counties, growing the program from 1,239 births to 34,946—50,820 families respectively if funded over two years. This program has been demonstrated to save \$3.17 for every \$1 spent in reduced Emergency Room costs alone.

Melanie Rubin, Director

NTEEA

Dallas, TX

HB2333 establishes nursing visits and critical supports for new parents and caregivers. We know how important early experiences are and how overwhelming bringing home a new baby can be. This tried and true program supports families at the right time and connects them to key supports and resources. HB2333 will create a program that is just what is needed to maximize both development and public dollars. It will not only benefit children and families but in the long run will have tremendous cost savings for the State.

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Kimberly Kofron, Executive Director
Texas Association for the Education of Young Children
Austin, TX

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Strategies like Family Connects provide short-term nurse home visits to bring together families, healthcare providers, and communities to improve maternal and child health and wellbeing. Research indicates:

- Infants had 50% fewer emergency room visits, and hospital overnight stays in the first year of life.
- Substantiated cases of child maltreatment were reduced by 44%.
- Mothers were more likely to complete their six-week postpartum health checkups.
- Mothers were 28% less likely to report clinical anxiety.
- For every \$1 spent this program saves \$3.17 in reduced ER costs alone.

Family Connects is currently available in only 5 counties statewide. With a proven return on investment and the ability to better utilize existing state investments, these strategies need a mechanism for expansion that can enable philanthropy, federal, and state investments to enable access to more Texas families with newborns.

Veronda Durden, President and CEO
Any Baby Can
Austin, TX

As the President and CEO for Any Baby Can in Austin, TX I'm proud to represent an organization that works with families to overcome challenges and support the health and development of their children. With programs that meet clients where they are – at home, work or school – Any Baby Can helps build stability, develop skills and navigate systems so children and families reach their full potential. We accomplish this through several home-visiting programs similar to Family Connects.

I encourage you to support HB 2333 by Rep. Howard today in the Public Health Committee.

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We encourage you to support HB 2333 to expand access to short term nurse home visitation for newborns (i.e., Family Connects) to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, reduce child abuse, and increase efficiency in resource and referral systems for families.

We are proud to host both the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program and the Parents As Teachers curriculum through our Healthy and Fair Start program. These programs are similar to Family Connects and through them we see outcomes that show that Texas children and their parents benefit when their family is enrolled in these two-generation home visiting approaches.

Sarah Crockett

Texas CASA

Austin, TX

As supporters of child abuse prevention programs in Texas, Texas CASA supports HB 2333. Strategies like Family Connects provide short-term nurse home visits to bring together families, healthcare providers, and communities to improve maternal and child health and wellbeing.

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Family Connects is currently available in only five counties statewide. With a proven return on investment and the ability to better utilize existing state investments, these strategies need a mechanism for expansion that can enable philanthropy, federal, and state investments to enable access to more Texas families with newborns because kids are essential. Please support HB 2333.