

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2490

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 31, 2021 8:00 AM

Jen Biundo, Director of Policy and Data

Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; Collaborative for Youth in Care (CLYC)

Austin, TX

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2490.

The Collaborative for Youth in Care (CLYC) is made up of eight organizations with expertise in teen pregnancy prevention and child welfare. We work to develop strategies to address pregnancy prevention and provide parenting supports to Houston-area youth in conservatorship.

As organizations with a mission of supporting adolescent parents, including those in the child welfare system, we urge you to support HB 2490 in the public health committee. HB 2490 would allow young mothers aged 17 and younger to consent to participate in home visiting programs.

Home visiting programs are supported by a wealth of rigorous research consistently showing them to be effective in supporting healthy families, reducing child abuse and neglect, improving birth outcomes, supporting school readiness, and resulting in a positive return on investment. (Source: National Conference on State Legislatures, Home Visiting: Improving Outcomes for Children)

According to the 2020 Texas Nurse-Family Partnership Report, 30% of clients served in the program were under age 20; and 13% were legal minors (under age 18). Home visiting providers report that some young pregnant women are not able to participate in their programs and receive much-needed support, not because their own parents are opposed to them participating, but because their parents are absent or disengaged. In fact, the lack of parental support and engagement may have been a contributing factor to the pregnancy. This is precisely the population that could most benefit from the intensive in-person supports offered by home visiting programs.

Young parents deserve support in ensuring a strong start for their families.

Cheryl Williams, Director of Nurse-Family Partnership

Any Baby Can

Austin, TX

I am the Director for the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program for Any Baby Can in Austin, TX. Any Baby Can works with families to overcome challenges and support the health and development of their children. A defining feature of our programs is our commitment to meeting families where they are – at home, work or school. We accomplish this through several home-visiting programs.

I encourage you to support HB 2490 by Rep. Howard and Rep. Rose when it comes up today.

Texas Home Visiting programs serve thousands of vulnerable families across the state, providing free home visits from early childhood and health professionals. For over 40 years, we have helped clients address medical, educational and financial obstacles and achieve whole family well-being.

Printed on: April 23, 2021 3:11 PM

Home visiting models funded through the Texas Home Visiting program include Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP); Parents as Teachers (PAT); Healthy Families America (HFA); and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI). We are proud to host both the NFP program and PAT curriculum through our agency. Our Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program matches first-time pregnant moms with a free, personal nurse to guide them through pregnancy and becoming a parent.

These evidence-based home visiting services show improved child development and school readiness and increases in positive parenting practices. Texas children and their parents benefit when their family is enrolled in these two-generation home visiting approaches.

Your support of this bill is important because Texas' teen pregnancy rates continue to be above the national average. Teen parents and their children deserve the ability to receive home visits from highly trained and supportive professionals to guide them in pregnancy and parenthood. These minors can consent for services for their child but should also be able to consent for the services for themselves.

In addition, HHSC should look for ways to refer eligible families served by Medicaid, WIC, TANF, and SNAP to Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a program that exclusively serves low-income mothers who are pregnant with their first child. Increased collaboration can promote better health outcomes and care coordination to improve the lives of low-income Texas families. Nurse-Family Partnership offers a return of up to \$5.70 per public dollar spent on its services to Texas' highest risk families.

Home visiting works and HB 2490 would help these programs work even better by increasing enrollment and retention of the highest risk families.

Sarah Crockett

Texas CASA

Austin, TX

HB 2490 would allow teen mothers to consent to receive these services for themselves and their child so that they may be supported in learning how to provide positive parenting and care for their children. The bill would also encourage HHSC to collaborate with DFPS to find ways to promote referrals of individuals benefiting from programs such as Medicaid and WIC to Nurse-Family Partnership, a home visiting program serving low-income pregnant mothers. Given that Texas has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the country, including some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy for teens involved in the child welfare system, Texas CASA believes this is a great bill.

Please vote yes on this important legislation in Public Health Committee.