

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Health Care Reform, Select
For HB 1599

Compiled on: Thursday, March 16, 2023 11:55 AM

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Hearing Date: March 16, 2023 8:00 AM

Michael Floyd, The Rev. Dr.
Central Texas Interfaith
Austin, TX

Bureaucracy itself shouldn't be an impediment for getting healthcare to those who are otherwise qualified. Please pass this bill.

Diane Duesterhoeft, Ms.
Texas IAF
San Antonio, TX

It seems that it would be most cost-effective to allow Texas Health and Human Services to use financial information that Texas already has to recertify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than rely solely on parents to update that information. Let's provide access to healthcare for all Texas children.

Thomas Hedrick
Dillon Joyce Ltd
Austin, TX

Tom Hedrick supports HB 1599.

HB 1599 by Reps. John Bucy and Sam Harless Uses Already-Verified Information to Facilitate Health Coverage Enrollment for Currently Eligible Kids.

HB 1599 allows HHSC to use already-verified information – such as income, household size, and citizenship – from other state programs to move verified, currently eligible kids from bureaucratic gridlock to an "express lane" for enrollment in Medicaid health insurance or CHIP.

For example, if a child is determined eligible for SNAP enrollment based on income information provided by the family, then HHSC would use that income information to determine Medicaid eligibility for the child rather than re-evaluating the family's income. States such as Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia have already implemented this express lane option.

RON COOKSTON

Self

Houston, TX

I support passage of this bill. It would be more efficient and result in needless additional paper work for citizens.

Mike Phillips, Texas IAF Leader

Texas IAF

San Antonio, TX

This bill is a good idea because it would allow Texas Health and Human Services to use financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than rely solely on parents to update that information.

Brittney Taylor-Ross

TexProtects

Dallas, TX

TexProtects supports HB 1599 by Rep. Bucy and Harless and thanks the committee for hearing this bill today.

TexProtects is the only statewide organization in Texas focused primarily on the issue of child abuse and neglect prevention and the aftermath in its absence. We are also proud to be the Texas Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America and a lead advocacy organization for the statewide Prenatal-to-Three Collaborative. One of the Collaborative's main policy priorities is to ensure children have continuous healthcare coverage.

This bill would ensure more children who are already eligible for health coverage are enrolled. By using already-verified information to facilitate health coverage enrollment for eligible children, this bill would reduce the children's uninsured rate by connecting more children to the health care they need. Texas has the nation's worse uninsured rate for children – but 400,000 of the states 995,000 uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid insurance or CHIP. This bill would also reduce duplication of costly and inefficient administrative effort by HHSC staff and ensure that only already-verified, currently eligible children whose parents provide affirmative consent will be enrolled.

Texas should join other states, including Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia in successfully implementing this “express lane” option. A 2013 Mathematica study on South Carolina's implementation found that it decreased the number of state staff needed to process paperwork, which lowered costs, and reduced unnecessary loss of children's health coverage each year.

Thank you to Representative Bucy and Representative Harless for championing this issue, and please vote HB 1599 out of committee as soon as possible.

Eddie Clark

Central Texas Interfaith & Texas IAF

Red Rock, TX

My name is Eddie Clark, and I am a Leader with Central Texas Interfaith and the Texas IAF, from Wildflower Church. I urge passage of HB 1599.

This bill would allow Texas Health and Human Services to use financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than rely solely on parents to update that information. I My own daughter struggled when after her divorce, her ex-husband failed to meet deadlines to reapply for Medicaid for my granddaughter, who at age 2 needed life saving kidney surgery. Allowing Texas HHS to use financial information already on file to re-certify children for healthcare under CHIP and Medicaid will lead to healthier outcomes for many Texas children who are currently falling through the cracks because even though they qualify for assistance, their parents find it difficult to keep up with refiling paperwork required. The health of our most vulnerable Texans should not be jeopardized because their parents lack the access, skills and knowledge of how to navigate a tangled web of paperwork, when the information is already in possession of Texas HHS. I urge passage of HB1599

Arlis Olson
COPS/METRO
San Antonio, TX

Need to expedite the process for parents to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP.

Eric Mata
Texas Organizing Project
Dallas, TX

I am writing to express my support for the proposed bill allowing the Texas Health and Human Services to use the financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than relying solely on parents to update that information.

Re-certifying children for Medicaid and CHIP can be burdensome and time-consuming for many families. Parents are required to provide updated financial information every year to maintain their child's coverage, which can be difficult for families struggling to make ends meet. As a result, many children lose their coverage because their parents cannot complete the re-certification process on time.

The proposed bill would allow Texas Health and Human Services to use the financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than relying solely on parents to update that information. This would make the re-certification process simpler and more efficient for families and help ensure children maintain their healthcare coverage.

Using financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP would also have significant cost-saving benefits for the state. By streamlining the re-certification process, the state could reduce administrative costs and avoid unnecessary healthcare expenses that result from children losing their coverage.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support the proposed bill allowing the Texas Health and Human Services to use the financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP. This common-sense solution would make it easier for families to maintain their healthcare coverage and would have significant cost-saving benefits for the state.

Carol Collins
Retired
San Antonio, TX

I am certainly in favor of this bill. It is reasonable to expedite help and save staff time! Thanks for your work.

Ana Cummings
Self, retired
Houston, TX

I wholly support this bill by Representative Bucy. The deadlines for reapplying for Medicaid or the child health plan program are short and often lead to lots of paperwork that is not really necessary. I know that a lot of poorer members of our community do not have computers or do not know how to use computers. Reapplying on the short periods of time is challenging for those citizens and often causes them to lose benefits that they or their children are entitled to have. Please approve this bill.

Cindy Fountain
TXUUJM TX Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Cleburne, TX

I support this bill It would increase the efficiency of the HHSC staff, thereby reducing costs. It would reduce the children's uninsured rate, connecting more kids to the health care they need. It will ensure that only already-verified, currently eligible children whose parents provide affirmative consent will be enrolled. Thanks for taking my comment. Please do the right thing for Texas children.

Marla Parvey
TXUUJM, TX Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Fort Worth, TX

Please pass this bill.

Stanley Yoder
Self, retired
Lake Worth, TX

Please expedite passage of this common-sense bill. There's no reason other than cruelty to throw up unnecessary roadblocks.

Marie Pousson
TMO Houston
Houston, TX

HB 1599 creates ease of recertification for programs like Medicaid and CHIP health plan for children. Texas has a horrible record of making things difficult for its citizens with regard to health outcomes. HB1599 would create an option to use data Texas already has to renew health benefits eligibility and enrollment. Texas should care for its citizens, especially those in most need, and those who are children whose health care is important. Our state is still ranked in the bottom tier of those who have the worst health care in the country. We can and must do better. HB1599 is a step towards that goal.

Marie Pousson
TMO Houston
voter in 77018

Maria Burdick
PAVE nonpartisan political action group
Houston, TX

I am strongly in favor of this bill.

Anne Dunkelberg, Senior Fellow
Every Texan
Austin, TX

Every Texan Supports HB 1599 as an essential tool to help Texas "Unwind" pandemic continuous Medicaid without cutting off eligible children, and to help enroll Texas' eligible but uninsured children. Details on our recommendations may be found at this link: <https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Keeping-Eligible-Kids-Enrolled-in-Texas-Medicaid-in-2023-and-Beyond.pdf>

Keeping Eligible Kids Enrolled in Texas Medicaid in 2023 and Beyond

Children and pregnant women face multiple barriers when trying to enroll in and keep Texas Medicaid or CHIP. Pre-pandemic data show at least 400,000 Texas children were uninsured in 2019 despite being eligible for Medicaid or CHIP, making it much harder for them to go to doctor check-ups, get needed medicine, access mental health support, and more.

During the 2021 legislative session, Texas leaders took a critical first step to reduce the number of eligible children who mistakenly lose Medicaid. During the interim, the House Select Committee on Health Care Reform built on that work, recommending additional crucial steps to help eligible kids and pregnant women get enrolled and stay covered.

In April 2023, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will start the enormous task of “unwinding” — re-checking eligibility for all Texans on Medicaid over 12

months following a 3-year nationwide pause on disenrollments during the pandemic. The 2023 Session is a critical time for the Legislature to act, to help Texas avoid a huge spike in eligible kids losing coverage in 2023 and 2024.

<https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Keeping-Eligible-Kids-Enrolled-in-Texas-Medicaid-in-2023-and-Beyond.pdf>

Judy Schockling
Self/retired
Sugar Land, TX

Please support HB 1599 by Representative John Bucy. This bill would allow Texas Health and Human Services to use financial information that Texas already has to re-certify children for Medicaid and CHIP rather than rely solely on parents to update that information.

Kathryn Earle
Myself
Houston, TX

We need to make sure all children that qualify are enrolled in the CHIP program. This will simplify that process. Please vote for this bill

Noel Denison, Reverend
The Metropolitan Organization
Houston, TX

I support HB1599 to increase efficiency in expediting determining eligibility and enrollment for certain people in Medicaid and for children in health plans

Phyllis Roberts
PAVE nonpartisan political action group
Houston, TX

This seems like a very logical and efficient way of certifying need for families who already qualify. It would probably also save money in processing.

Thank you for your work and for making Texas a better place to live for all!

Phyllis Roberts

Adrienne Lloyd
Children's Defense Fund-Texas
Austin, TX

Children's Defense Fund-Texas Written Testimony, Health Care Reform, Select Public Hearing | Adrienne Lloyd, Health Policy Manager, The Children's Defense Fund – Texas
March 16, 2023

My name is Adrienne Lloyd and I am the Health Policy Manager at the Children's Defense Fund-Texas. The Children's Defense Fund-Texas supports HB 1599, to use already verified information to improve health coverage enrollment of eligible children across the state.

Texas has the worst uninsured rate for children in the country. There are many factors contributing to this unfortunate title the state holds; among these are the bureaucratic barriers in Texas' eligibility and enrollment system that discourage or prevent enrollment and renewal of eligible Texas children.

The "Express Lane Eligibility" option to use eligibility information – such as income and household size – already verified by HHSC through SNAP or other programs to help enroll and renew enrollment of eligible kids whose parents provide affirmative consent in Medicaid and CHIP presents a critical pathway towards reducing those bureaucratic barriers.

Texas would join states including Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia who have already successfully implemented "Express Lane Eligibility." Implementation of "Express Lane Eligibility has been shown to decrease paperwork and staff time needed to renew eligible children's eligibility, which ultimately leads to reduced unnecessary costs for the state every year. Children's Defense Fund-Texas strongly believes that our state leaders implement policies that remove barriers to children and their families enrolling and maintaining their health coverage. Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to share testimony in strong support of HB 1599.

Sharon Watkins Jones, Chief Equity Officer

Children at Risk

Houston, TX

Time is of the essence when it comes to protecting our families by keeping kids healthy. HB 1599 will use already-verified information to facilitate health coverage enrollment for currently eligible children.

This bill allows HHSC to use already-verified information – such as income, household size, and citizenship – from other state programs to move verified, currently eligible kids from bureaucratic gridlock to an "express lane" for enrollment in Medicaid health insurance or CHIP. States such as Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia have already implemented this express lane option successfully.

Texas families shouldn't have unnecessary delays when seeking the care their children need. Children at Risk supports HB 1599 and urges the committee to favorably consider this important measure to put our children on a fast track to good health.

For Children,

Sharon Watkins Jones (She/Her)

Chief Equity Officer

Director, Texas Racial Equity Collaborative

Children at Risk

EVE MARGOLIS

self

Austin, TX

I am in full support of this bill. By allowing The commission to use express lane eligibility by evaluating data received from an applicant under other public assistance programs to determine the applicant's eligibility under the medical assistance program, children will get the resources they need in a more timely manner. It is unfair to keep nutrition and medical needs from children because of poorly designed bureaucracy.

Laura Velez

Self

Austin, TX

I support this bill.

Juan Flores
La Fe Policy Research and Education Center
San Antonio, TX

Please support HB 1599 and assist families in continuing their children's health insurance enrollment in the Medicaid and CHIP programs. As you know, DHHSC will begin rechecking Medicaid eligibility for millions of Texans after pausing that process for three years.

Texas must not add to its high number of uninsured children and its negative health and financial effects on families. Low-income, Latino, and Black children will have greater disproportionate uninsured rates with long-term poor health and economic mobility barriers.

HB 1599 allows HHSC to use already-verified information – such as income, household size, and citizenship – from other state programs to move verified, currently eligible kids from bureaucratic gridlock to an "express lane" for enrollment in Medicaid health insurance or CHIP.

For example, suppose HHSC determines that a child is eligible for SNAP based on income or citizenship information provided by the family. In that case, HHSC can use that information already verified to determine eligibility for Medicaid rather than re-evaluating the child's income or citizenship using its methods. HHSC can enroll that child into coverage if a parent affirmatively opts into this express lane option.

There is bipartisan support for HB1599. Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia successfully implemented this approach. A 2013 Mathematica study on South Carolina's implementation found that it decreased the number of state staff needed to process paperwork, lowered costs, and reduced unnecessary loss of children's health coverage each year. In fact, Texas' House Select Committee on Health Care

Reform's recent report recommends this approach.

In summary, HB 1599 is an "Express Lane" re-enrollment option that works and will:

- Reduce duplication of costly and inefficient administrative effort by HHSC staff.
- Reduce the children's uninsured rate, connecting more kids to the health care they need. Texas has the nation's worst uninsured rate for kids, but 400,00 of the state's 995,000 uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid insurance or CHIP. *
- Ensure that only already-verified, currently eligible children whose parents provide affirmative consent will be enrolled.

Thank you

Lisa Stone
self, educator
HOUSTON, TX

This bill makes great sense: it uses information already in state control to maintain and increase efficiency. I strongly support this effort to improve Texas procedures for Medicaid enrollment, which controls costs and increases good health outcomes.

Kay Pruett, Dr.
self
Austin, TX

As a special educator and person of faith, I urge you to pass HB 1599 to make it quicker, easier, and more likely that children of families with limited resources will have access to health care that helps them to more fully access their education. I have worked with many students who had health needs such as ear infections go untreated for months while families faced hurdle after hurdle to getting the needed coverage so they could then get the needed treatment. In the meantime, hearing and consequently student learning were negatively affected. Not having to produce and provide the same documentation that a family has already provided for other services could help children more quickly get treated and back on track with their education. This would also likely increase the efficiency of intake personnel by lessening their need to evaluate and enter data that someone else has already evaluated and entered.

Sarah Skinner
self (teacher)
Fort Worth, TX

I ask for support for this bill. We should be ensuring that there are as few barriers as possible to children getting the assistance they need.

Ruben Barrera, Resident
Self
Austin, TX

HB 1599 by Bucy

I support this legislation relating to implementation of an express lane option for determining eligibility and enrolling certain individuals in Medicaid or the child health plan program.

Cecile Roeger

self Promoter of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation for the Dominican Sister of Houston
Houston, TX

it is important that we work to keep kids healthy. HB 1599 will use already-verified information to facilitate health coverage enrollment for currently eligible children. This would avoid any interruptions in treatments and /or obtaining care needed to keep children healthy.

Susan Burek

Self: I am Parent and advocate
Austin, TX

Thank you for allowing me to testify regarding HB 12. My name is Sue Burek and I live in Austin, Texas. I am a parent, advocate for people with disabilities, and a member of several advocacy organizations that serve families with children with disabilities, including Texas Parent to Parent, Protect Texas Fragile Kids, and Loving Hearts for All.

I am testifying IN SUPPORT OF HB 1599 by Bucy. The legislation would implement an "express lane agency" to verify financial eligibility for Medicaid, SNAP, and other public benefits using technology that is commonly used to approve credit and loan applications. The use of an "express lane agency" to verify financial eligibility for benefits would speed up the application and eligibility process, reduce the need to verify information that is already available through other sources, reduce the burden on agency staff to request and process these verifications, and reduce the incidence of eligibility errors and fraud in the determination of public benefits.

Please APPROVE HB 1599 to implement an "express lane option" for determining eligibility and enrolling certain individuals in Medicaid or CHIP in Texas.