

# Extend Meaningful Health Care Coverage to More Texans

Access to timely health care supports healthy people and communities while expanding state and local economies – a win-win for patients and taxpayers. Texas adopted legislation in 2021 to extend health care coverage for children and new mothers (neither yet implemented). Today, more than 5 million Texans still lack health insurance, while others are “underinsured” – exorbitant out-of-pocket cost precludes them from seeking care. Though people lack health insurance for different reasons, having it is important for everyone. That is why the Texas Medical Association encourages lawmakers to enact a multipronged strategy to close the state’s coverage gap.

## Covering more Texans is family friendly – and budget friendly

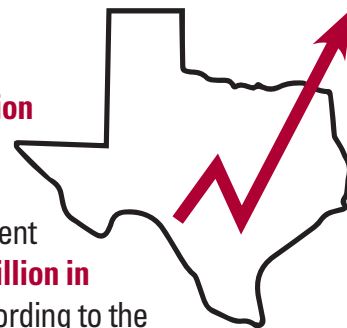
Texas can leverage federal funds to design its own Medicaid coverage initiative for working-age, low-income adults and parents, with the federal government paying for 90% or more of the costs, and other savings offsetting the rest. In 2020, four Texas economists estimated Texas could save \$75 million to \$125 million over the biennium if it adopted this plan, while also improving economic productivity and financial security of working families.

Increasing women’s health care coverage improves maternal and child health outcomes. Research shows providing access to comprehensive health services before, during, and the full year after pregnancy contributes to better outcomes for mothers and babies. Healthy pregnancies begin in the months and years before conception – an essential time for women to get preventive and primary care and to identify and manage underlying chronic diseases. Women with coverage before pregnancy also are more likely to obtain early prenatal care.

Boosting health care coverage is vital to improving use of cost-effective preventive care. When the federal public health emergency ends, millions of Texans now enrolled in Medicaid will lose coverage, either because they no longer qualify for it or another program, or because they get lost in the shuffle while Texas verifies eligibility. Texas is one of six states where children stand to lose coverage at higher rates because of red tape. Physicians urge lawmakers to adopt best practices, like South Carolina’s Express Lane Eligibility system, to simplify and streamline the state’s outdated enrollment practices. Gaps in coverage too often mean kids skip needed care.

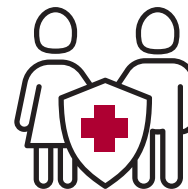
Enrollment in Texas Medicaid programs jumped from 3.8 million in February 2020,

a number that had been dropping in recent years, to about 5.1 million in December 2021, according to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.



20%

Increase in Texas Medicaid enrollees



26%

Increase in number of children on Medicaid

### TMA's Legislative Recommendations

- Pursue budget-friendly options to extend affordable coverage to low-wage, working parents and adults.
- Extend Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months to improve maternal health outcomes – an initiative implemented by 21 other states so far, including Florida and Georgia.
- Increase Medicaid Breast and Cervical Cancer program eligibility to help more women get life-saving treatment.
- Stream Medicaid enrollment and eligibility to promote timely enrollment.
- Conduct robust outreach to educate Texans about health care coverage options.



Physicians Caring for Texans

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