

Texas Hospitals' Public Policy Priorities to Support Healthy Hospitals, Patients and Communities for 2019-2020



Leading the nation in population and job growth, Texas has one of the country's strongest economies. Yet, no other state has more residents without health insurance, and no other state has experienced more hospital closures in rural communities.

A strong economy depends on healthy residents and communities. And that requires a strong health care infrastructure.

To support a strong health care infrastructure, Texas hospitals advocate for the following:

1. A state budget that protects funding for health care programs and services to meet the physical and behavioral health care needs of a growing population.



- Continue state funding of health and human services programs and services, including adequate Medicaid funding that supports hospital payments that are closer to the actual costs of providing health care services.
- Maintain a dedicated funding source for the state's network of trauma hospitals to compensate for some of their unreimbursed costs of providing life-saving trauma care.
- Continue state funding for educating and training a workforce of physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals and allied health care professionals in numbers sufficient to care for the state's large, growing and aging population.

2. A fair and equitable system of financing hospital payments.



- Continue the current property tax structure and oppose limiting local jurisdictions' ability to generate revenue for essential services.
- Support locally generated solutions, including local provider participation funds, to generate the required non-federal share of Medicaid supplemental payments and increased hospital reimbursement rates.
- Support maintaining Delivery System Reform Incentive Program supplemental payments within the hospital financing system while working with stakeholders to develop fair and equitable value based payment models that support access to care and good health care outcomes.

3. An increase in the number of Texans with affordable, comprehensive private health insurance.



- Support enrollment of all uninsured Texans who are eligible for coverage in the federal health insurance marketplace.
- Support development of a private market solution for low-wage working Texans with incomes too low to qualify for marketplace health insurance to purchase affordable, comprehensive health insurance.

4. Funding for behavioral health care that is commensurate with the need for services and policies that foster, rather than inhibit, access to emergency psychiatric care.



- Increase state funding to ensure timely and appropriate access to inpatient and outpatient, community-based services and supports for Texans with a behavioral health diagnosis.
- Support revising the Texas Mental Health Code to allow physicians, not only law enforcement, to detain temporarily a patient deemed to be a danger to self or others for the purpose of conducting a thorough psychiatric assessment and evaluation and assessing the need for continued psychiatric treatment.
- Support revising the Texas Mental Health Code to allow physicians to delegate to an advanced practice registered nurse or physician assistant the ability to conduct a pre-admission examination to determine whether an individual meets the criteria for voluntary inpatient mental health services and obtain a physician's order for admission if admission criteria are met.



5. Simplification and alignment of state and federal quality and patient safety reform initiatives.

- Minimize conflicting and inconsistent initiatives related to health care quality and patient safety.

6. Preservation of the state's model medical liability and prompt payment laws.



- Oppose legislation to repeal the state's 2003 tort reform law and any efforts to modify the law's limits on non-economic and medical damages.
- Protect the confidentiality of hospitals' physician and nurse peer review processes.
- Support the current law (Prompt Pay Act) to ensure that physicians and hospitals receive timely and accurate payments for health care provided and ensure the law's applicability to all payor sources.

7. Empowerment of health care consumers through access to information that supports better health care decision making.



- Support efforts to inform consumers of the critical licensing and regulatory differences among hospitals, hospital-affiliated freestanding emergency centers, non-hospital-affiliated freestanding emergency centers and urgent care centers.
- Support enhanced disclosure of the ability of freestanding emergency centers to charge facility fees and of their participation in insurance networks.