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For Immediate Release
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Austin - Yesterday, Texas officials revealed that the state has requested federal funding to cover the costs of COVID-19 tests for uninsured Texans, as originally reported by The Texas Tribune. The funding has been available since March 18 under legislation signed by President Trump, but Texas had not yet requested the funding. In a recent letter, over 50 Texas organizations urged state leaders to request the funding and take several additional steps to address COVID-19 needs of uninsured Texans and reduce the Texas uninsured rate, to better address the public health and economic challenges the state is currently facing.

Following the announcement that Texas requested the funding, the following members of the Cover Texas Now coalition issued the following statements:

"We applaud the announcement that the Texas Health and Human Services Commission has opted into 100% federal funding to support free statewide COVID-19 testing for uninsured Texans," said Anne Dunkelberg, Associate Director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities. "This step is essential to help Texas avoid the dangerous public health consequences if a large share of our 5 million uninsured Texans were left out of testing and tracking of the disease. Unobstructed access to testing is critical not only now as Texas moves toward peak levels of COVID-19 illness in the weeks and months ahead, but also is absolutely essential to our future ability to ease the level of required social distancing and re-open our state economy."

“This is a good step forward,” said Katie Mitten, Health Policy Associate at Texans Care for Children. “The Texas strategy for the public health crisis and the economic crisis must also include efforts to reduce the state’s uninsured rate. Texas already had the highest uninsured rate in the nation due to state policy decisions, and it’s going to get a lot worse as Texans lose their jobs unless state leaders work on expanding health coverage. To help Texans stay healthy and manage to pay their bills during this economic crisis, state leaders need to make sure that Texans have health insurance for everything from coronavirus treatment to cancer to strep throat to getting healthy before a pregnancy.”
“Accepting federal funds to provide no-cost testing to uninsured Texans is a critical first step but more is needed,” said Dr. Laura Guerra-Cardus, Deputy Director, Children’s Defense Fund – Texas. “To date, we have not yet secured affordable treatment for uninsured Texans. Like the horrendous stories we are hearing across the country, this is having a real impact on people’s lives right now. Medicaid expansion would be the easiest and most helpful path forward to ensuring many more Texans get the treatment and financial protections they need during this crisis and beyond. With the worst uninsured rate in the nation and rising unemployment, Texas needs a comprehensive solution — and that means expanding access to healthcare coverage.”

"We look forward to supporting the implementation of this new funding, working with the Governor and HHSC to ensure Texas also takes necessary steps to make sure tests are available regardless of citizenship status, and to advocating for state and federal solutions to covering COVID-19 treatment for the uninsured,” said Dunkelberg.