



EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

Every Texan **Supports** HB 133 by Rose

Relating to the Medicaid eligibility of certain women after a pregnancy.

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Every Texan strongly supports HB 133 by Rose as it directs the Health and Human Services Commission to provide women in Pregnant Women's Medicaid comprehensive Medicaid coverage for 12 months postpartum. Currently, Texas provides full-benefit Medicaid coverage to women during their pregnancy if their income is below 198% of the federal poverty guidelines and they meet citizenship/immigration requirements. Federal statute requires states to provide 2 months of Medicaid coverage to women after the end of their pregnancy. Texas is one of only a few states that does not provide a comprehensive Medicaid option to low-income women beyond the required two months. Without access to comprehensive health coverage, people are more likely to delay or fail to seek needed medical care because they are financially unable to afford health services. After pregnancy some women may enroll into the Healthy Texas Women's Plus program (created by SB 750 during the 86th Legislative session). However, as opposed to the 12-month Medicaid coverage proposed by HB 133, HTW Plus is not comprehensive health coverage. The program does not cover many important services, including a broad prescription drug benefit, surgical care, hospital inpatient or outpatient care, and physical therapies. Also, HTW Plus has virtually no network of specialty or mental health providers to deliver covered services right now.

HB 133 would implement the top recommendation of the most recent report from the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee by increasing access to comprehensive health coverage to women in the year following their pregnancy. The committee found that nine out of ten pregnancy-related deaths were preventable, and one-third of maternal deaths occurred 43 days to one year after pregnancy. Increasing access to comprehensive health coverage after pregnancy would improve a mother's ability to address chronic health conditions, a top contributing factor to maternal mortality¹

Finally, the American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law on March 11, 2021, includes a bipartisan provision giving states the option of extending postpartum Medicaid coverage using a State Plan Amendment (SPA) instead of through a Section 1115 waiver. SPAs are a much faster way to secure federal Medicaid matching funds and less complex to implement. HB 133 could be strengthened by making it clear that HHSC should implement the program using the faster, more efficient SPA option.

¹ Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report. (Dec. 2020).