Testimony to Legislative Budget Board re HHSC

Karolina Rivera, Director of Communications and Operations for the Texas Association of Charitable Clinics
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Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Budget Board:

Good morning. My name is Karolina Rivera. I am a United States Air Force veteran, a mother, and the Director of Communications and Operations for the Texas Association of Charitable Clinics, or TXACC.

TXACC supports nonprofit free and charitable clinics across Texas through training, technical support, partnerships, data, and advocacy.

For me, this work is personal.

After I left the military, there was a time when my son and I relied on programs like SNAP and Medicaid. I know what it feels like to work, raise a child, and still worry about whether you can afford everything your family needs.

For many Texas families, that means making difficult choices between healthcare and other basic needs. No one should have to put off needed care just to keep up with everyday expenses.

My circumstances have changed, but I have never forgotten that uncertainty.

Every day, charitable clinics across Texas care for Texans facing those same hard choices.

Our clinics are the safety net of the safety net. They care for Texans who fall through the gaps — people who have few options for affordable healthcare but still need care. Without charitable clinics, the emergency room may become the only place left to go.

The people making this care possible are Good Samaritans — doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals who donate their time and skills to care for their neighbors.

Our 2025 statewide assessment included 60 charitable clinics. Those clinics reported more than one hundred fifty-eight thousand unique patients, two hundred thirty thousand medical visits, one hundred three thousand dental visits, and one hundred fifty-four thousand volunteer hours. And we know there are more charitable clinics across Texas doing this work.

Today, TXACC is asking for a $10 million state investment in Texas charitable clinics.

The Legislature has already considered ways to support this work. During the 89th Legislature, a rider was proposed to establish a Charitable Care Clinics Grant Program through the

Department of State Health Services. Separately, the House version of the state budget included $10 million for a Charitable Care Clinics Grant Program in Article 11.

TXACC is prepared to administer and distribute this investment to eligible charitable clinics across Texas. Funding could support workforce, technology, equipment, operations, and infrastructure to help clinics expand their capacity to provide care.

Accountability would be built into the program. TXACC would track where state dollars are distributed, how they are used, how many patients are served, and what new capacity is created, and report those results back to the state.

The foundation is already in place. With a $10 million state investment, charitable clinics can build on what is already working and reach more Texans who would otherwise fall through the gaps.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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This advocate participated in programming that equips Texans most impacted by state budget decisions with the knowledge, skills, and support to advocate for policies that strengthen our communities.