Testimony to Legislative Budget Board re HHSC

Maira Alejandra Carrier, CEO/ Founder - Maya's Love, San Antonio

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Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Budget Board:

My name is Maira Alejandra Carrier. I am a San Antonio resident, Army veteran, mother, public health professional, and founder of Maya's Love, serving communities across South Texas.

Before any of those roles, I was a child whose family relied on Medicaid. I learned early that having coverage and having access are not always the same thing. At 17, I joined the Army, and the way I accessed care changed.

Today many years later after my childhood, families ask the same question: We have coverage, but where can we actually get care?

They call provider after provider, drive farther, wait longer, and sometimes, they go without treatment altogether.

But while they search for help, life does not stop.

They are still expected to show up to work, sometimes earning minimum wage, without paid leave or adequate health benefits. They still have to pay rent, put food on the table, and care for their children. This is the reality that many Texans are facing.

Federal data from March 2025 show that nearly four in ten U.S. civilian workers in the lowest wage quarter had no access to paid sick leave.

We tell families to ask for help. Then we leave them choosing between a paycheck and an appointment.

And unfortunately, an appointment is not truly accessible if getting there means losing the money that keeps your family housed.

How much more are we asking parents to carry while their child is struggling?

A parent's persistence cannot replace an available provider and a child's need for treatment does not pause while adults navigate the system.

We must also protect safe behavioral health treatment capacity. When services disappear, the people who need them do not. Their needs land in another emergency room, on another interest list, or in the hands of another overwhelmed family.

I ask LBB to prioritize these needs in evaluating HHSC's budget request, and I ask the Legislature to fund them. Families need investments that turn coverage into actual care, including restoring the 10% cut (about $23 million) to Budget Strategy D.2.4, community mental health grant programs.

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.

Increase funding for Medicaid reim behavioral health reimbursement to support a sustainable provider network.

Fund Exceptional Item #23, which increases staff for the Office of the Inspector General to process Medicaid Provider Enrollment background checks and streamline provider enrollment. Funding this exceptional item will improve program integrity and improve Medicaid provider availability for qualifying Texans.

Because a Medicaid card is not a mental health provider. A referral is not an appointment. And a name in a directory is not a promise that someone will see your child.

I knew that reality as a child. Today, I see it through the families I serve.

Families are doing their part. They need a system that does its part, too.

Getting help should not require a family to risk everything else they need to survive.

Thank you.

Maira Alejandra Carrier,

Founder - Maya's Love

San Antonio

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