Testimony to Legislative Budget Board re HHSC

Salimatou Diallo, Executive Director, The Voice Behind Changes, and McKinney resident
Sept. 24, 2026 | sdiallo@thevoicesbehindchanges.com

Honorable Chair and Members of the Legislative Budget Board:

My name is Salimatou Diallo, a former asylee, mother, and community advocate living in McKinney, Texas. I am here to support funding for the HHSC Community Partner Program and for HHSC's Access and Eligibility Services workers.

Every time my son develops a fever or complains of severe pain, I don't have the luxury of waiting to see if he will get better. My son lives with sickle cell disease, a lifelong condition that can quickly become life-threatening without immediate medical care.

For our family, Medicaid has never been just another government program. It has been the reason my son could receive the specialized care that has kept him alive.

Recently, during a transition between jobs, my son's CHIP renewal fell through the cracks and left him without health coverage for nearly three months. During that time, he required two emergency room visits, one hospitalization, and multiple follow-up appointments with his specialists.

I am now navigating the H1113 process to request retroactive coverage for those medical expenses. What should have been a temporary administrative issue has become months of uncertainty, growing medical bills, tremendous stress, and being sent to collections. Illness does not wait for paperwork. Children living with sickle cell disease cannot postpone a medical crisis until their insurance is restored.

Even as someone who is employed, educated, and deeply engaged in my community, this experience has reminded me how quickly a family can become vulnerable. I cannot imagine what this would look like for parents who are still learning English, unfamiliar with our healthcare system, or afraid to ask for help.

No parent should ever have to choose between taking their child to the hospital and worrying about the financial burden that follows. HHSC's Community Partner Program provides vital support for the trusted local organizations that help families like mine fill out and follow through on Medicaid and CHIP applications and renewals. Unfortunately, lawmakers have not funded the HHSC Community Partner Program in over a decade. The Texas Legislature must invest in the state's eligibility systems so fewer families fall through the cracks the way we did.

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.

I am asking the Legislature to restore funding for the Community Partner Program with a $15 million investment. Further, I ask the Legislature to support HHSC's Exceptional Item 3 to continue investing in the eligibility systems and staff that process Medicaid and CHIP applications and renewals, so a child's chance to receive life-saving care is never determined by an administrative delay or a parent's ability to pay.

Thank you for considering the human impact of these decisions.

The Voices Behind Changes
Together We Thrive

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