



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF TEXAS**

**TESTIMONY
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**Senate Health and Human Service Committee
SB 1854 (Deuell)
May 3, 2011, 9:00 a.m.**

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a non-partisan, political organization with 29 local Leagues across the state. Women's health and access to basic health care services, including maternal and child health care, preventive care, and family planning, are very important to our members. LWV-TX has been a long-time proponent of the Women's Health (Medicaid waiver) Program (WHP) and strongly supports its continuation.

BUT LWV-TX must OPPOSE SB 1854. While authorizing continuation of the WHP, this measure contains a "poison pill" that would make a sham of the program by excluding Planned Parenthood from participation. Currently, Planned Parenthood serves almost 40% of the 100,000 low-income women covered by the WHP, providing screenings for cervical and breast cancer, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and birth control.

Without Planned Parenthood's participation, there are not enough clinics and physicians available to care for the women eligible for Medicaid services. Senator Deuell, the sponsor of SB 1854, acknowledges that finding new health care providers to serve the thousands of women who currently use Planned Parenthood will be a difficult challenge. Losing Planned Parenthood as a provider would be disastrous to women's health and lead to expensive unintended pregnancies that would adversely affect Texas' already bleak financial situation.

LWV-TX deplors the short-sighted and ham-fisted approach to women's health care that is written into SB 1854. We urge this Committee to amend the bill by removing the Planned Parenthood exclusion. LWV-TX would enthusiastically support the measure if amended in this way.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our views.