



TESTIMONY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF Texas
Senate Finance Committee
SB 1, Article II – Health and Human Services
January 31, 2017

The League of Women Voters-Texas (LWV-TX) thanks the Finance Committee for the tremendous amount of work that you do during the legislative session. Consistent with the LWV-TX adopted positions on issues related to Health and Human Services, we submit the following testimony:

MEDICAID: *LWV-TX does not support budget cuts that would undermine children's access to health care. We support improved enrollment and retention for CHIP and Children's Medicaid and the preservation of the state's public health safety net.*

- ❖ We are concerned that the proposed budget provides no funding increase in Medicaid. We urge the Committee to greatly increase Medicaid funding with consideration to medical inflation and higher usage. We also encourage you to work toward increasing the use of federal funds for Medicaid.

CHIP: Funding for CHIP is \$2 billion, a \$156.3 million increase, which we support.

- ❖ We support including in the budget funding for medical inflation and higher utilization for CHIP x in the FY 2018-2019 budget.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: *The League of Women Voters of Texas supports the right of all persons who have behavioral health disorders to have access to services designed to help them reach and maintain an optimal level of functioning in the least restrictive environment. The League believes that state government should ensure that services are accessible to persons with behavioral health disorders.*

- ❖ Funding for behavioral health, while dispersed through the budget, includes \$3.4 billion across 16 agencies, including \$96 million to address current and projected waitlists. (This does not include Medicaid or CHIP funding.) LWV-TX appreciates your continuing support of strategies to address those with behavioral health disorders.

WOMEN'S HEALTH: *LWV-TX supports protecting the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.*

- ❖ The proposed budget provides no increase in funding for Women's Health. We recommend adding additional funds as recommended by the Legislative Budget Board.

HEALTH CARE FOR OLDER AND DISABLED ADULTS: *The League of Women Voters of Texas supports a comprehensive health care system for older Texans that ensures a seamless continuum of quality care.*

- ❖ It appears that funding for "All Inclusive Care – Elderly" is the same as in FY 2016-2017 at \$8.8x billion. We support increasing funding to support the needs of an aging population that produces additional clients.

Jane McFarland/Laura Blackburn for League of Women Voters-Texas

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES: *The League of Women Voters of Texas supports the development and implementation of adequate legislation, policies, services, and programs to protect children from abuse and neglect. Preventive programs are critical to protecting children.*

- ❖ We appreciate that the proposed budget maintains the emergency CPS workforce investment, but are concerned that there is inadequate state funding for preventive programs. The proposed budget uses federal government funds to cover state cuts of approximately \$10.5 million in the Nurse-Family Partnership budget and the state's portion covering the Texas Home Visiting Program (THV) has been cut by \$6.1 million in the Senate. There is no assurance that the new federal administration will continue funding for the main home visiting funding source, the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV). Also, the state must provide a "Maintenance of Effort" (MOE) to pull down the MIECHV funds. The federal funding is a partner to state funding for scaling up our programs, not a replacement. LWV-TX requests that the state of Texas provide adequate state funding for these critical preventive programs.

Conclusions of LWV-TX:

The League of Women Voters of Texas supports constitutional and statutory provisions for flexibility within a coordinated finance structure; equitable taxation system that assures adequate revenue; and increased accountability

It is evident to us that additional funding, beyond the Comptroller's estimate, will be needed to adequately fund the health and human services needs of Texas citizens in the next biennium. The LWV-TX strongly recommends that the Economic Stability Fund (Rainy Day Fund) be used to cover our health care needs. We further advocate that the State of Texas accept federal funds for Medicaid as the current state policy is harming for our youth and other needy individuals.

We are aware that a 1.5% across the board reduction of General Revenue will be applied. These reductions are not reflected in our analysis.

For additional information, please contact:

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The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizens' organization that has fought since 1919 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 3,900 members and supporters throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.

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