



February 27, 2012

AAUW-TX urges all Texans to tell the Governor and the Commissioner of HHSC that playing politics with women's health is unacceptable. The Women's Health Program (WHP) must be continued for another five years. More money must be spent on family planning for low income women, not less! The figures demonstrate clearly that preventing unplanned births is good for Texas. It's good for the women who want to postpone pregnancy so that they can care for the children they already have, and it's good for the taxpayers who save millions of dollars each year.

The program has been in effect for five years and has already proved remarkably successful. Providing birth control for one year to a low income woman costs the state an average of \$241; if that same woman became pregnant, the average cost to the taxpayer for her pre-natal and delivery care and the baby's first year Medicaid costs would be \$16,360. More than 55% of births in Texas are paid for through Medicaid, so reducing unintended pregnancies by only a few percentage points saves millions of dollars. Making low income women eligible for Medicaid family planning services is especially important in Texas, where 26% of adult women are uninsured. The only services provided are birth control, cancer screening and testing for sexually transmitted infections.

The non-partisan Legislative Budget Board, in its report to the 82nd Legislature in 2011, not only recommended that the WHP be continued; it also recommended that it be expanded. Its report states that in the second year of the WHP, more than 5,000 births were averted in Texas for a total dollar savings for 2008 alone of \$42.4 million.

However, on Thursday, February 23, the Commissioner of the Texas Health & Human Services Commission signed an order implementing a new rule in Texas--no agency that is in any way affiliated with an abortion provider can receive state funding for family planning services through the WHP. Governor Perry and Commissioner Tom Suehs both know that signing this order, which is effective March 14, means that Texas will have to cancel this program for ALL family planning providers in Texas. The federal government has already told the Commissioner that Texas will not get approved for the program at all if this politically-motivated decision is implemented. Thus more than 130,000 low-income women will be denied access to family planning and cancer screening services. This cut will come on top of the legislature's recent budget cuts, which reduced funding for family planning by more than 60%. The Governor and Commissioner Suehs should act quickly to reverse this short-sighted decision.

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