



Texas Hospital Association
Response to House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Article II Request for
Information - Interim Charge #1

Sept. 30, 2020

Interim Charge #1: Monitor the agencies and programs under Article II and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation and riders passed by the 86th Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the Subcommittee will also specifically monitor:

- *Implementation of DSHS Rider 29; evaluate the capacity of immunization programs to prevent, reduce and eliminate vaccine-preventable diseases in adults and children.*

Immunization is the state's best defense against the spread and resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases. Texas hospitals always are prepared to respond to novel and infectious diseases, but vaccination is critical to protect and maintain the baseline health our communities. And its efficacy cannot be understated, especially amid a global pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, health care services remain in high demand, but challenges persist with the resources and bandwidth needed to respond. Widespread vaccination is needed to mitigate further strain on the health care system.

Each year, Texas hospitals play an active role in promoting vaccination among their patients and staff. With the threat of an impending "twindemic", the Texas Hospital Association recently launched a public awareness campaign to help hospitals encourage their patients and staff to get a flu shot. In addition to digital and print collateral, tools provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services are essential to ensure Texans can access affordable vaccination services close to home. DSHS' vaccination finder tool and public-facing resources in English and Spanish help connect Texans to the vaccination services they need. These resources are especially important among underserved populations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention distributed a May report, noting a significant decrease in routine immunization among school-aged children due to deferred well-child visits during the early months of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic likely will continue influence whether and how Texans access preventive health care services, including vaccination. Health care providers face an uphill battle to maintain baseline immunity against vaccine-preventable diseases. Targeted and ongoing support from the state is critical to this mission.

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