



Texas hospitals urge lawmakers to support **Senate Bill 1903** by Sen. José Menéndez and **House Bill 4985** by Rep. John Lujan to **improve and modernize behavioral health technologies** in Texas psychiatric hospitals.

This legislation would establish a grant program for **enhancing the technological capabilities** of behavioral health care providers with a **one-time investment** of \$50 million for implementation.

A Documented, Pressing Need

Groundwork for a state investment in behavioral health technologies was laid last session and must have follow-through as patients seek treatment for increasingly acute mental health challenges. Prompted by Senate Bill 640 from 2021, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission **studied the technological needs** of behavioral health providers, including psychiatric hospitals, and **found critical shortfalls**. The study notes that:

- Most psychiatric hospitals have **no electronic health records** system due to the extreme costs of implementation.
- Behavioral health providers have **long been excluded** from federal programs that fund technology.
- Historically **low reimbursement rates** for services have contributed to the overall challenge.



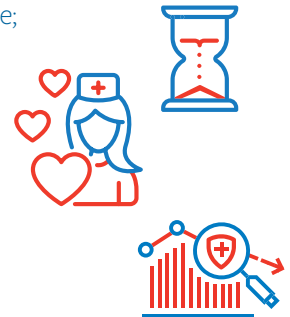
A Critical, One-Time State Investment

Simply put, **cost is the No. 1 barrier** for behavioral health providers in advancing interoperability and technology. Through the study, **HHSC recommends grant opportunities** and allocations to help Texas behavioral health providers implement electronic health record platforms.

Hospitals estimate that the **one-time initial costs** of implementing a robust electronic health records system are over \$1 million. To create meaningful strides toward interoperability for behavioral health providers and improve access to care, Texas should allocate \$50 million to the grant fund.

The high cost of technology for behavioral health providers has resulted in a **significant barrier for people who need services**. Texas must invest in these technologies to:

- Improve timely access to care;
- Ensure secure exchange of information;
- Ease clinician burden;
- Improve patient satisfaction;
- Improve outcomes; and
- Lower costs of care.



SB 1903 / HB 4985 would:



Establish a state grant program to enhance technological capabilities of behavioral health providers; grants can be used to:



- Purchase electronic medical records platforms;
- Expand interoperability of health information;
- Expand patient access to digital records and services;
- Improve IT infrastructure, privacy and security; and
- Improve service delivery through mobile devices.