Tano E. Tijerina
Webb County Judge

November 8, 2021

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201
Chiquita.Brooks-LaSure@cms.hhs.gov

Dear Director Brooks-LaSure:

We, the undersigned members of the Webb County Commissioners Court, show our support of your ongoing efforts to work with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to avoid further reductions in Medicaid payments to the safety net providers that serve the Texas Medicaid and uninsured population.

Texas hospitals have been working without the additional financial support provided by the Uniform Hospital Rate Increase Program (UHRIP) payments (expired August 30th), the Delivery System Reform Incentive Program (DSRIP) payments (expired September 30th) due to this it has resulted in substantial uncertainty and worry for critical providers in our community.

Medicaid provides health coverage for 1 of every 12 adults, 2 out of every 5 children, and 5 out of every 8 nursing home residents statewide, and our Medicaid providers are on the front lines in our ongoing battle with COVID-19. In Webb County, home to over 267,000 Texans, 95% of the county's total population is of Hispanic or Latino origin.

1000 Houston Street, 3rd Floor • Laredo, Texas 78040
Tel.: (956) 523-4600 • Fax: (956) 523-5065 • Email: webbcountyjudge@webbcountytx.gov

As leaders of Webb County, we are strongly committed to supporting the Medicaid and underserved populations living in our community. Medicaid and the long standing local indigent care program are essential lifelines for many Texas citizens and the health care safety net providers that serve those citizens. This is particularly true in areas of the state, including Webb County with large numbers of low-income citizens.

Notably, much of the care provided to Medicaid beneficiaries and uninsured patients is funded in large measure by Medicaid supplemental payments and Medicaid managed care directed payments authorized by the state's 1115 Waiver and Directed Payment Programs. While states are obligated to provide 40 percent of the state's non-federal share through state general revenue, up to 60 percent may come from local governments.

Texas has long relied on locally adopted and administered Medicaid provider taxes to fund the non-federal share of these vital supplemental payment programs. Webb County, through the Webb County Healthcare Funding District, has administered such an assessment, known as a Local Provider Participation Fund, since 2011. The local assessment is not only compliant with all applicable federal Medicaid requirements, but is also essential to funding the non-federal share of Medicaid payment programs that ensure the solvency and sustainability of the Medicaid providers in our community.

We greatly appreciate the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) ongoing efforts to work with HHSC to ensure the section 1115 waiver and directed payment programs allow Texas Medicaid beneficiaries continue to receive the care they need. In this process, we urge that you to also keep the immediate needs of health care providers in mind. We of course support an appropriate resolution of the disputed issues in a manner that will preserve the long-term financial stability of the Texas Medicaid program.

While we understand that CMS offered to extend UHRIP and DSRIP for an additional year and that related negotiations between CMS and HHSC are ongoing, we feel that timely relief is critical. We support solutions that allow payments to Medicaid providers to resume sooner rather than later while other disputed issues are appropriately resolved.

Again, we thank you for your efforts to maintain payments to Medicaid providers that serve low-income Texans and we urge you to continue those efforts and keep the immediate needs of those providers in mind.

Sincerely,

Honorable Tano E. Tijerina
Webb County Judge

Honorable Jesse Gonzalez
Commissioner Precinct 1

Honorable Rosaura Tijerina
Commissioner Precinct 2

Honorable John C. Galo
Commissioner Precinct 3

Honorable Cindy Liendo
Commissioner Precinct 4

cc: Honorable Daniel Tsai, Deputy Administrator and Director
Honorable Judith Cash, State Demonstrations Group Center