



Texas Association of Health Plans
1001 Congress Ave., Suite 300
Austin, Texas 78701
P: 512.476.2091
www.tahp.org

May 10, 2023

Re: TAHP Supports HB 2802

Dear Chairwoman Kolkhorst and Members of the Committee,

The Texas Association of Health Plans supports House Bill 2802, which will allow Medicaid beneficiaries to easily receive important health-related updates, including eligibility updates, via text and email from their health plans. The legislation is especially important as the state begins the Medicaid eligibility redetermination process for an estimated 2.7 million Texans who have had continuous coverage as a response to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE).

During the PHE, Texas managed care organizations (MCOs) used texts to provide members important health updates such as appointment reminders, benefit notices, and COVID-19 updates. However, the impact has been limited while the state continues to operate under an “opt-in” model to communicate. MCOs often hear from their members that the option to opt-in to texting and email on the eligibility application is confusing. Texans report overlooking or misunderstanding instructions when filling out their preferred contact preferences.

We believe the process for individuals to receive text communications from their health plan should be as simple and streamlined as possible. It is increasingly evident that outreach via text messaging is one of the most effective means of communicating with Medicaid beneficiaries. In fact, [83% of Medicaid beneficiaries in the U.S. own a smartphone](#). As a result, important health information has the potential to reach individuals more quickly and accurately through text than through traditional mail.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) agrees. In January of this year, the FCC released [guidance](#) that confirms that MCOs may call or text a person regarding their Medicaid eligibility or enrollment if they include their phone number on any application for health insurance. MCOs do not need to obtain additional consent in order to contact their members.

At least 21 states already allow texting with implied consent with an option to unsubscribe, and with good reason—text messages are a widely used and effective form of communication. When



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one Medicaid MCO in Tennessee implemented its text message program, they connected with more than 60% of their members and found that mobile reminders have been 50% more effective in closing care gaps compared to other traditional forms of communication like phone calls and mailers.

Texas is not alone in rethinking its approach to communicating with Medicaid recipients. In Virginia, only 30,000 Medicaid enrollees out of more than a million have opted-in to receive text messages. In an effort to increase that number, the state is also rethinking its approach to opt-in language.

[Medicaid members are more likely to engage](#) when their preferred method of communication is used to reach them. When [Montana](#) began sending texts and emails to update member addresses for returned mail, individuals who received a text were 40% more likely to update their entire contact information, and about 25% of members responded to update their mailing addresses specifically.

Another MCO used text messages for expecting mothers who received a series of messages pertaining to healthy eating habits, what to expect during prenatal checkups, suggestions for staying active, and even incentives for completing necessary checkups. This guided, personalized approach increases the likelihood that expecting mothers will make healthy choices, complete necessary tests and checkups, and remain engaged with their health plan throughout their pregnancy and beyond.

Used effectively, text messaging can both enhance existing forms of communication to Medicaid families and improve the delivery of the State's critical safety net programs. We appreciate your consideration of this important health matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Dudensing". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jamie Dudensing, RN
CEO, Texas Association of Health Plans



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Exhibit 1: Excerpt from the Texas Medicaid Application

Preferred Method of Contact by Health Plan Providers or Managed Care Organizations

If you get health benefits from us, your health plan provider or managed care organization (MCO) may contact you for the following.

- Appointment reminders
- Information about your health care matters
- Other important notices

You can choose to receive this contact by phone, text message or email.

Text message and e-mail are not encrypted and may not be secure. The risks include an unauthorized third party intercepting confidential or private information. If one of these is your preferred method of communication for your health care, be aware of these risks when sending your personal information by text or email.

Your MCO or health plan provider must take reasonable steps to make sure that your health care information stays private.

By completing the information below, you acknowledge that you understand the risks associated with receiving electronic communications and consent to HHSC sharing your preferred method of contact with your MCO or health plan provider.

Select your preferred contact method from the list below.

Name: _____

Language you prefer to be contacted in: _____

<input type="checkbox"/> By Telephone	Telephone Number: _____ (if contacted by cell phone, the call may be auto-dialed or pre-recorded, and your carrier's usage rates may apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> By Text message	Cell phone number: _____ (Carrier message and data rates may apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> By e-mail	E-mail Address: _____