



Texas Department of State Health Services
Biennium Legislative Appropriations Request Stakeholder Hearing
On Behalf of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas
July 26, 2022

On behalf of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, a coalition of organizations working to promote policies that prevent and reduce obesity in Texas, thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Texas Department of State Health Services' (DSHS') legislative appropriations request for the 2024-2025 biennium.

We strongly support continued full funding of DSHS' Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention programs to encourage Texans to be physically active, make healthy food choices, and engage with other strategies to help prevent obesity and other chronic illness.

DSHS' Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention programs make healthy choices easier for all Texans across all areas and stages of their lives. The programs included under Diabetes Prevention and Control, Heart Disease and Stroke Program, and the Obesity Prevention provide vital resources to local health departments and community organizations and transform environments with evidence-based interventions addressing physical activity and healthy eating. These programs also collect and evaluate intervention data to ensure successful, impactful, and effective use of public health resources. State general revenue investment in these programs also creates the infrastructure that makes Texas a competitive applicant for obesity-related federal grant funding opportunities.

Strong and sustained investment in these programs is important as obesity remains a critical issue and an epidemic across the state. **Texas has the 8th highest obesity rate for youth ages 10 through 17 and 12th highest adult obesity rate in the country.** Youth have an obesity rate of 20.3 percent and adults have an obesity rate of 35.8 percent, an increase from 29.2 percent in 2012. Texas is 12th in the nation for both rates of adults with diabetes and hypertension at 12.2 percent and 31.7 percent respectively.ⁱ

The COVID-19 pandemic and necessary public health response exacerbated the already high rates of obesity as food insecurity and sedentary behavior increased during stay at home orders.ⁱⁱ As Texans continue to normal routines, the Obesity Prevention Programs at DSHS are equipped to help mitigate these trends because they address those same obesogenic factors and are implemented in existing institutions such as childcare facilities, workplaces, and public health departments across communities.

Finally, obesity and chronic disease cost Texas and Texas businesses in health care costs as well as through lost time at school and work, and lower productivity.ⁱⁱⁱ Continued funding for Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention will keep Texans healthy and productive, saving the state future funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the department's legislative appropriations request. For any questions or follow-up, please contact Joel Romo, Chair of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas Legislative Committee at Joel.Romo@texanapublicaffairs.com.

Sincerely,

David Lakey, MD

Chair of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas

ⁱ The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Trust for America's Health. (2020). The State of Obesity in Texas. Retrieved from <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/states/tx>.

ⁱⁱ Ganzar, Leigh Ann, et al. "Longitudinal changes in objectively-measured physical activity and sedentary time among school-age children in Central Texas, US during the COVID-19 pandemic." *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 19.1 (2022): 1-11.

ⁱⁱⁱ Combs, Susan. 2011. "Gaining Costs, Losing Time: The Obesity Crisis in Texas." https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/Publications/2011/2011-02_GainingCostsLosingTime.pdf.p 17