



**Texas House Human Services Committee**  
**House Bill 1571 by Representative J.M. Lozano**  
**Written Testimony on Behalf of:**  
**Texas Pediatric Society and Partnership for a Healthy Texas**  
**March 28, 2023**

Chair Frank, Vice-Chair Rose, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Texas Pediatric Society and the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1571. We strongly urge you to support HB 1571 to help students access health services at school and to provide school districts with sustainable funding for health services.

Over 5 million children attend Texas' public schools each day. With how much time children spend in school, the education system presents an opportunity to meet children where they are to provide health services. Many students already benefit from speech therapy, audiology, mental health screenings, and nursing services provided by school-based providers. Having these services within the school environment makes them accessible to students because parents do not have to take off time from work for appointments or deal with transportation, both barriers to care. It also reduces missed instruction time because student travel moves from across town to down the hall. However, currently only a sub-set of Medicaid enrolled students can fully access these services while at school.

**With House Bill 1571, Texas can help more students on Medicaid access the benefits of school-based services, promoting both health and academic outcomes.** This change would allow districts to bill Medicaid for all Medicaid-covered services provided to students already enrolled in Medicaid. Texas schools are currently only authorized to bill for services provided to Medicaid-enrolled students if those services are included in the student's individualized education plan (IEP). Establishing an IEP can be a long process, taking up to 75 days. Interventions in IEPs center on academic goals, meaning health-related services like mental health screenings that are not education-related are not provided. Students who do not require an IEP may also benefit from these school-based health services.

Allowing schools to bill Medicaid for services brings school districts a new and sustainable source of federal funding which can be used to bolster healthy school environments. Many schools already provide some of these health services because they see the benefits to students. Being able to bill Medicaid, however, would relieve the strain on the school budget and would give districts the capability to hire school health staff and provide more services. Consistent staffing of school health roles can better support investments in the Whole Child School Health approach which includes a broad range of practices from health education to physical activity to nutrition, practices that help students develop habits that keep them healthy long-term. **All Texas students benefit from this investment, not just those who are receiving direct services.**

More than 17 states have adopted this change to support schools and students, including Florida, Georgia, and Arizona. Because this change does not require additional spending from the state to pull

down federal funds, states have seen huge financial benefits. Florida, for example, estimated that they would receive an additional \$50 to \$100 million in federal funds for school health.<sup>1</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bill 1571. For any questions or follow-up please contact Clayton Travis, Director of Advocacy and Health Policy with the Texas Pediatric Society at [Clayton.Travis@txpeds.org](mailto:Clayton.Travis@txpeds.org).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.floridapolicy.org/posts/bill-for-medicaid-matching-dollars-in-schools-hits-ron-desantis-desk-florida-politics>