



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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March 23, 2021

The Honorable James Frank
Chairman, House Committee on Human Services
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Chairman Frank and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

As you are likely aware, more than half of maternal deaths in Texas occur 60 days or more after delivery, or exactly when new mothers lose all Medicaid benefits. 68 percent of these deaths involved women who were enrolled in Medicaid at the time of delivery. Lamentably, the majority of these maternal deaths were preventable, with diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease among the leading causes of death.

House Bill 133 by Rep. Toni Rose takes the common-sense step of extending the existing maternal Medicaid benefit from 60 days after delivery to 12 months. Presently, lack of access to care often results in health complications becoming increasingly severe, or worse, ending a new mother's life. This lack of access also prevents new mothers from getting a variety of screenings and treatments for other disease as well, including postpartum depression. As a result, the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Taskforce's top recommendation in its September 2018 report was "increasing access to health services during the year after pregnancy."

Extending the existing maternal Medicaid benefit will help reduce healthcare costs, uncompensated emergency room visits and preventable deaths. It will make it less likely that children will interact with the state's foster care or criminal justice systems, leading to further cost savings in the future. HB 133 is a forward-thinking piece of legislation that will help keep new mothers alive and new families intact. Most importantly, it is simply the right thing to do. Please join me in supporting HB 133.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner", written over a circular stamp or watermark.

Sylvester Turner,
Mayor