

## Provide Necessary Information to Parents and Providers to Improve Health Coverage for Newborns

Support HB 3940 by Rep. Ann Johnson and SB 2728 by Sen. Molly Cook

### Many Newborn Babies are Falling Through the Cracks and Not Getting Timely Health Coverage

- Under federal law, if a mother is enrolled in Medicaid insurance when she delivers her baby, her newborn is eligible and must be automatically enrolled in Medicaid at birth and through the first full year of life.
- However, state data from 2023 show that nearly **1 in 5 newborns was not auto-enrolled (over 22,000 newborns in 2023)**, requiring manual action of eligibility workers to enroll instead. The manual process takes 45 days on average, compared to just 6 days for auto-enrollment.<sup>1</sup>
- Health care providers confirm that newborns are falling through the cracks, leaving them uninsured at critical early checkups. In a recent interview, one family physician noted, *“This happens all the time. The baby won’t have insurance at their two-week appointment, and by their two-month appointment, they still don’t have it.”*<sup>2</sup>



### Newborns are Missing Out on the Health Care They Need

- Early checkups, screenings, and medical care are vital for a baby’s healthy start.<sup>3</sup> Any delays in medical care can cause significant health issues for children.<sup>4</sup>
- Many pediatric clinics are unaware that a mother’s Medicaid ID can be used if a newborn has not yet been assigned one. **These clinics then inform patients they will be responsible for their medical bills, which providers report dissuades low-income families from bringing their babies to checkups or getting other medical care.**

### Senate Bill 2728 and House Bill 3940 Will Ensure Newborns Can Go to the Doctor While Waiting to Be Manually Enrolled in Medicaid:

- The bills require HHSC to annually notify medical providers, hospitals, birthing centers, and managed care organizations that if a newborn who should be auto-enrolled in Medicaid has not been assigned an ID number yet, they may use the mother’s Medicaid number for reimbursement during health appointments.
- The bills require HHSC to provide parents of newborns with additional information in resource pamphlets that are already provided during hospital discharge. The information will address eligibility and the process for applying for Medicaid for their child and how to use the mother’s ID for coverage.

## Endnotes

1. Texas Health and Human Services Commission. (2023). *Newborn automated referrals through DSHS interface*. [Unpublished data].
2. Texans Care for Children. (2024). *Interviews with maternal health care providers*. [Unpublished data].
3. Hagan J.F., Shaw J.S., & Duncan P.M. (Eds.). (2017). *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents*. (4th ed.). American Academy of Pediatrics.
4. Hoffman, C. & Paradise, J. (2008). Health insurance and access to health care in the United States. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1136(1), 149-160. Retrieved at: <https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1196/annals.1425.007>