Texas Public Health Coalition

1. Support HB 1256, HB 1418, SB 829, and SB 830 to protect first responders against vaccine-preventable infectious disease by enabling access to their own up-to-date immunization status during a disaster and requiring their employers to establish protective infection control policies.

2. Support SB 329 granting parents the right to access de-identified immunization data for their child’s school. This is essential information for the parents of medically fragile children.

3. Support HB 1848/HB 1360 to define the conditions of reportable flu and multidrug-resistant organism infection outbreaks and improve long-term care facility infection control.

4. Support HB 1423/HB 1361 to improve tracking and accessibility of long-term care facility resident and employee aggregate immunization data.

5. Oppose any effort to weaken school vaccination requirements or exemption tracking, including HB 1490.

The Texas Public Health Coalition recommends:

Higher vaccination rates can protect vulnerable Texans from infectious diseases.

In 2017-18, Texas faced unprecedented public health and infectious disease obstacles, with Hurricane Harvey, the influenza epidemic, and multidrug-resistant organisms. Vaccines are a safe and cost-effective way to prevent or mitigate infectious diseases. However, as immunization rates wane and these diseases remain a threat, Texas must protect its most vulnerable populations.

**First Responders**
To do their job safely, first responders must be vaccinated against serious infectious diseases. Unfortunately, during Hurricane Harvey, many first responders were unaware of their vaccination status and thus received precautionary but potentially unnecessary tetanus shots. Texas’ limited vaccine supply was depleted, with less vaccine available for residents exposed to dangerous floodwaters. Texas must be better prepared to protect those who protect us when disaster strikes again.

**Nonmedical Exemptions**
In 2018, 56,738 nonmedical school vaccine exemptions were issued in Texas, a 2,300-percent increase in exemptions issued since 2003. Childhood vaccines are safe, cost-effective, and proven to protect children from potentially deadly infectious diseases. Polling shows that Texans, no matter their political party, overwhelmingly support strong childhood vaccine laws.

**Long-Term Care Residents**
Aging Texans are among the most vulnerable to influenza outbreaks, especially those who live in long-term care facilities. They also are more susceptible to infection by multidrug-resistant organisms, which cannot be treated with antibiotics. The consequences can be deadly.

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Vaccines Prevent Infectious Disease Outbreaks

In the 2017-18 Flu Season

11,917 Texans died because of the flu

76% were age 65+

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The Texas Public Health Coalition is a coalition of health professional organizations and health-focused organizations dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion.

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MEMBERS

Alzheimer’s Association
American Heart Association
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Children’s Hospital Association of Texas
The Cooper Institute
Harris County Public Health
The Immunization Partnership
March of Dimes
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Texas Academy of Family Physicians
Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Texas Academy of Physician Assistants
Texas Association of City & County Health Officials
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
Texas eHealth Alliance
Texas Health Institute
Texas Hospital Association
Texas Medical Association
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc.
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
Texas Public Health Association
Texas Renal Coalition
Texas School Nurses Organization
Texas State Alliance of YMCAs
United Ways of Texas

RESOURCES

CANCER PREVENTION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON CANCER CENTER
MICHAEL AND SUSAN DELL CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES
PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY TEXAS

REFERENCES
4. Texas Department of State Health Services, 2017-18 surveillance data from the Division for Laboratory and Infectious Diseases Services.