

RESOLUTION NO. 20230504-021

WHEREAS, Texas has the highest rates and number of uninsured and underinsured people in the nation, with 1 in 5 Texans uninsured; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 caused over 600,000 Texans to lose access to job-based healthcare during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on April 1 2023, pandemic-era policies that allowed for continuous eligibility expired; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that 700,000 Texans could lose health insurance coverage, increasing the uninsurance rate by at least 2 percentage points across the state; and

WHEREAS, Texas suffers from some of the worst racial health disparities in the nation, clearly demonstrated by both the maternal and neonatal mortality rates amongst Black Texans and the unequal distribution of morbidity and mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the cost of health care often prevents people from getting needed care and/or filling prescriptions; and

WHEREAS, during the current 88th Texas Legislative Session, State Representative Julie Johnson and State Senators Nathan Johnson and Cesar Blanco filed the Live Well Texas bills (House Bill 652 and Senate Bill 195), which would drastically expand healthcare to low-income Texans; and

WHEREAS, patients should have access to qualified providers without the limitations of In-Network and Out-of-Network structures; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that access to health care should not be tied to employment; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan established the percentage of City residents with health care coverage as a Healthy Austin Indicator and in 2021, 19.9% of Travis County residents ages 18-64 did not have health insurance coverage; and

WHEREAS, the Strategic Direction 2023 Health and Environment Strategies include providing and/or supporting initiatives that can connect those seeking wellness and medical care with the appropriate providers and help them navigate and overcome critical barriers to obtaining health and mental health services; and

WHEREAS, Medicare has provided guaranteed health care for millions of seniors for more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Medicare for All will guarantee that all residents in the City of Austin and the State of Texas will be fully covered for health care without copays, deductibles or other out-of-pocket costs, and would save millions in taxpayer dollars; and

WHEREAS, Medicare for All legislation has been filed and supported by members of the United States Congress in 2021 and 2022; and

WHEREAS, the quality of life for the residents of Austin will vastly improve because they would be able to receive the regular health care they need; and

WHEREAS, all Austin residents deserve access to equitable comprehensive healthcare; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City of Austin hereby endorses and urges the United States Federal Government to develop and enact Medicare for All legislation to provide universal, comprehensive health care coverage with zero cost-sharing for patients to ensure appropriate health care coverage for all residents of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic recovery period, and beyond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City of Austin calls on the Texas Legislature to support the passage of the Live Well Texas bills to expand access to vital healthcare.

ADOPTED: May 4, 2023

ATTEST:



Myrna Rios
City Clerk