



CHARLES PERRY
TEXAS STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 28

June 13, 2019

Dr. Courtney N. Phillips, Commissioner
Texas Health and Human Services
Brown-Heatly Building
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78751-2316

Dear Commissioner Phillips,

We, the undersigned members of the Texas Legislature, respectfully submit our recommendations on the administration of the increased funding of the Alternatives to Abortion Program, Strategy D.1.2, Health and Human Services.

Alternatives to Abortion funds a robust, statewide social services program, contracting with pregnancy resource centers, adoption agencies, and maternity homes. The scope and purpose of the program is to serve not only birth parents, but also adoptive parents, and to provide the available services to Texas families until up to three years after the child's birth. These services support Texas families while they establish a stable social and economic foundation for themselves and their children. Services include material assistance, job placement training, counseling/mentoring, and parenting classes. The program's funding has consistently grown with each budget cycle; even in 2011, when many other programs saw reduced funding, the state prioritized the availability of Pro-Life alternatives for women facing unexpected pregnancies.

Texas Pregnancy Care Network ("TPCN") has served as the main contractor for A2A since 2005, and has a rapidly growing wait-list for providers who are qualified and eager to join the program and serve Texans in need. TPCN served 27,921 moms and dads in FY17, 33,977 moms and dads in FY18, and is on track to serve over 45,000 moms and dads in FY19 with its 137 provider locations. **An additional 29 provider locations are ready and waiting to come on board with TPCN, and dozens more locations have been identified as interested in participating. Additionally, existing TPCN providers are actively expanding services offered and adding locations.**

COMMITTEES: WATER & RURAL AFFAIRS, *CHAIR* • HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, *VICE CHAIR*
CRIMINAL JUSTICE • TRANSPORTATION, FINANCE, AGRICULTURE

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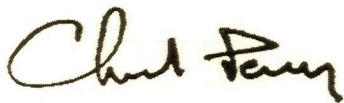
In the 2016-17 biennium, appropriations were increased by \$8 million for a biennium total of \$18.3 million, and in the 2018-19 biennium appropriations were increased by \$20 million for a biennium total of \$38.3 million. However, in both cases, HHSC went through lengthy RFA processes which were not complete until nine months after the start of the biennium. These delays thwarted the legislative intent to greatly expand the existing program. During these unnecessary delays, HHSC took it upon itself to revamp and change what was already a very successful program. The Legislature would not have made the increase in appropriations had we not believed the Program was already extremely successful. Despite the delays, the Program significantly expanded clients served during those (shortened) bienniums, and we believe that under the current existing Program framework, the Program will once again fully utilize all of the appropriated dollars to serve even more clients statewide.

This biennium, the Legislature has approved a \$21 million increase for the program, with an additional \$20 million authorized for HHSC to expend in a rider if the program shows a need, bringing the total program budget to \$79 million for the biennium. The intent of the Legislature increasing appropriations is to continue to support the current program contractors that have a successful track record of growing and overseeing the Program, without changing the scope and goals of the Program.

Additionally, the intent of the Legislature is to make additional dollars available to current contractors that are rapidly expanding clients served in physical locations around the state. HHSC should not seek to expand or change the scope and purpose by agency rule, and should consider eliminating Program changes instituted through the last two RFAs/RFPs, except those that expanded the periods of eligibility and added adoptive parent services.

The purpose of the Alternatives to Abortion Program is to assist those who choose Life in difficult circumstances. Excessive barriers to entry and/or excessive documentation for clients thwart this purpose. HHSC should immediately institute a contract renewal for existing providers in good standing rather than force existing contractors to rebid each budget cycle so that program funding may immediately be used for the legislative purpose of helping to build stronger Texas families. Agency policy, our state budget, and our Legislature should reflect the strong Pro-Life beliefs of Texans, and Texas's well-established commitment to women having access to options reflecting that all life has value.

Signed,



Sen. Charles Perry



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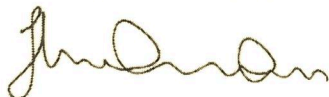
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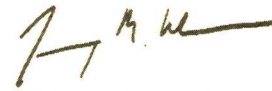
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