

**SUBJECT:** Continuing the women's health advisory committee until 2019

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 10 ayes — Price, Sheffield, Arévalo, Burkett, Coleman, Cortez, Guerra, Klick, Oliverson, Zedler

0 nays

1 absent — Collier

**WITNESSES:** For — Carl Dunn, Texas District - American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Alice Bufkin, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition; Kami Geoffray, Women's Health and Family Planning Association of Texas (*Registered, but did not testify*: Sally McCluskey, Angelo State University; Stacey Pogue, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jennifer Henager, Central Texas Regional Advisory Council; Wendy Wilson, Consortium of Texas Certified Nurse-Midwives; Christine Reeves, Heart of Texas Regional Advisory Council; Lauren Kreeger, League of Women Voters of Texas; Shannon Lucas, March of Dimes; Jessica Cox, NAPNAP, NANN, AWHONN; Nakia Winfield, NASW-Texas Chapter; Valerie Brumfield, Nurses; Anthony Farmer-Guerra, Spread Hope Like Fire; Danielle Roberts, Tarrant County College Nursing (NSA); Maureen Milligan, Teaching Hospitals of Texas; Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children; Dan Hinkle, Texas Academy of Family Physicians; Gwen Daverth, Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; Katherine Miller, Texas Freedom Network; Jennifer Banda, Texas Hospital Association; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Chrystal Brown, Kelley Bryant, Cathryn El Burley, Ashley Carter, Naomi Clifton-Hernandez, Jenny Delk-Fikes, Margie Dorman-O'Donnell, Gabrielle Frey, Kimberley Grant, Ruth Grubestic, Karen Jeffries, Laura Kidd, Patricia Morrell, Eloisa G. Tamez, and Jeff Watson, Texas Nurses Association; Patricia DeFrehn, Texas Nurses Association, Nurse Executives; Tammy Eades and Kelsey Crawford Spelce, Texas Nursing Association; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Marla Andrade, Texas State University; Emily Alexanderson and Melinda Hester, Texas State University School of

Nursing; Janet Realini, Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition; Brittany Anderson, Savannah Bobbitt, Connie Castleberry, Tamatha Dayberry, Linda Green, Janice Hawes, Maria Hayes, Joyce Heggins, Toni Henderson, Lisa Herterich, Cynthia Hill, Anita Lowe, Janice Miller, Sybil Momii, Katherine Mulholland, Amy Pickett, Carol Randolph, Donna Rich, Dorothy Sanders-Thompson, Rebecca Smith, Jill Steinbach, Terry Throockmorton, Karen Timmons, Gabriela Torres, Whitney Vanderzyl, and Ramona Wesely, TNA; Michelle Stokes, TNSA; Candice Ford and Susan McKeever, TSNA; Nancy Walker, University Health System/Bexar County; Joe Garcia, University Health System; and 14 individuals)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Geoff Hughes, TNA)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lesley French, Health and Human Services Commission)

**BACKGROUND:** Government Code, sec. 531.02221 requires the women's health advisory committee to be abolished and its governing statute to expire on September 1, 2017.

The women's health advisory committee was created by SB 200 by Nelson, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Sunset bill, enacted by the 84th Legislature in 2015. The advisory committee provides recommendations to the commission on the consolidation of women's health programs. The HHSC executive commissioner may appoint up to nine members to the advisory committee and must ensure that a majority of the members are health care providers who:

- are participating in women's health programs of various sizes;
- are located in separate geographic areas in Texas; and
- have experience in operating women's health programs.

The HHSC executive commissioner may appoint a member who does not meet the previous criteria if the member represents the women's health industry and is knowledgeable on the best practices for women's health programs.

**DIGEST:** HB 279 would continue the women's health advisory committee until September 1, 2019.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** By extending the women's health advisory committee to 2019, HB 279 would help ensure that the consolidated women's health program at the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) continued to receive necessary support in meeting the demographic, geographic, and other challenges the program may face. The consolidated Healthy Texas Women Program was just implemented in July 2016, and it is too early to determine whether the program will need major changes before the advisory committee is scheduled to terminate in 2017.

The women's health advisory committee was created in 2015 to address concerns that health care providers who offered women's health services through HHSC and former Department of State Health Services programs would not have their input adequately taken into account in development of the consolidated women's health program at HHSC. The 2015 consolidation of women's health programs was the third major overhaul of these services since 2011, and provider input is needed to ensure that the program would adequately provide services to Texas women across the state, including rural areas.

Extending the advisory committee through HB 279 would allow the committee to review data on program utilization, cost per client, clients served, provider network adequacy, and access in rural areas. This data still is being gathered, as the Healthy Texas Women Program was just implemented. As the program rolls out, the advisory committee is necessary to help providers get information about billing and coding and other information about changes to the program. The committee also provides an opportunity for the public to interact with HHSC on women's health care and for stakeholders and experts to work on these issues.

While the Sunset Advisory Commission recommended consolidating duplicative advisory committees, the women's health advisory committee has a unique purpose, and its role cannot be performed by a different advisory committee. The advisory committee has been effective because of its composition, which includes federally qualified health centers and providers who have on-the-ground knowledge in women's health. It should be continued until 2019 to allow health provider input as the Healthy Texas Women Program rolls out.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

One of the goals of the HHSC Sunset review in 2015 was to consolidate statutory advisory committees to permit the agency to function more effectively. Continuing the women's health advisory committee until 2019 would undo part of the consolidation work done by the 84th Legislature.

**NOTES:**

A companion bill, SB 790 by Miles, was approved by the Senate on April 3 and referred to the House Public Health Committee.