



**SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD**  
SENATE DISTRICT 5

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Schwertner Files Legislation to Expand Texas' Mental Health Workforce**

*As outlined in Governor-Elect Abbott's Healthy Texas Plan, SB 239 would create a loan repayment program for mental health professionals who treat underserved patients.*

**AUSTIN, TX** -- Today, Senator Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown) filed legislation to help expand the ranks of Texas' mental health professionals and improve access to mental health services. Schwertner's SB 239 would offer student loan repayment assistance for psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed professional counselors, psychiatric mental health advanced practice nurses, and clinical social workers who agree to provide direct care to underserved Texans.

"Texas needs a mental health workforce capable of meeting the growing needs of our growing state," said Schwertner. "Without an adequate number of mental health professionals, we will continue to see those suffering from mental illness cycle through our jails and emergency rooms at great expense to the taxpayer."

The shortage of mental health professionals represents one of the state's most serious healthcare challenges, as identified by both Governor-Elect Greg Abbott's *Healthy Texas* plan and the Interim Report of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.

"Helping those who struggle with mental illness is an issue very near and dear to my heart," said Schwertner. "As someone whose mother spent over 25 years as a nurse in our state's mental health system, I know firsthand what impact a dedicated mental health professional can have on the life of someone suffering from mental illness."

In 2013, Senator Schwertner passed legislation providing Texas educators with a free, voluntary training program to help identify the warning signs of a mental health crisis and learn the appropriate strategies to respond to serious mental conditions like depression, trauma, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and anxiety. Known as Mental Health First Aid, this program has already provided valuable training to over 7,700 educators in its first year. Earlier this month, Senator Schwertner filed SB 133 to expand the Mental Health First Aid program to include school administrators, counselors, school resource officers, bus drivers, and other district employees.

This past November, Dr. Charles Schwertner was overwhelmingly reelected to serve the citizens of Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas. Following the 83rd Legislative Session, Senator Schwertner was named a "Courageous Conservative" by the Texas Conservative Coalition, a "Lone Star Conservative Leader" by the Texas Conservative Roundtable, and "Senate Freshman of the Year" by Texas Monthly magazine.

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