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THE SENATE OF TEXAS



LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR

DISTRICT 18

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**SENATOR KOLKHORST PASSES HISTORIC STATEWIDE MENTAL HEALTH PLAN,
SECURES \$40 MILLION FOR NEW VICTORIA PSYCHIATRIC FACILITY**

(AUSTIN, TX) — Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) crafted and spearheaded the adoption of an historic plan to expand mental health services across Texas, including securing \$40 million for a new mental health facility based in Victoria County.

Passing sweeping legislation, in addition to overseeing mental health spending in two budget bills, Kolkhorst said she is proud to lay the groundwork for increased mental healthcare for decades to come.

“Many Texans are impacted by someone who suffers with mental illness, and this has been exacerbated since the pandemic. This comprehensive plan builds upon precious investments in San Antonio and Austin but also creates new facilities across Texas. One of the new hospital hubs will be in the crossroads region,” said Kolkhorst.

As the Chair of the Health and Human Services workgroup for the Senate Finance Committee, Kolkhorst led the effort in the Senate to craft the new statewide plan to deliver historic mental health spending for the 2024-25 biennium. This includes \$9.4 billion in House Bill 1 and \$2.2 billion in Senate Bill 30, which sets course for a decade of constructing a robust expansion of mental health services across Texas.

“I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick for his commitment to funding mental health services, a promise he made and fulfilled after traveling the state last fall,” said Kolkhorst. “It has been humbling to have the opportunity to direct a new plan that will invest significant taxpayer dollars to address the mental health crisis we face today.”

To improve mental health services specifically to children and adolescents, Kolkhorst authored Senate Bill 26, which creates a new grant program to provide funds to local communities through their hospitals, mental health authorities, and non-profits. The goal of the grant program is to fund innovative new ways to address mental and behavioral needs to young people.

She also helped write and pass Senate Bill 30, which allocates \$40 million to Victoria County, specifically for the construction of an inpatient psychiatric facility with up to 60 beds.

Kolkhorst said the new facility will provide badly-needed relief to Victoria and surrounding counties, which currently suffer from high numbers of adults and youths awaiting mental health services.

“I attended a listening session in July 2022 in Victoria with many community leaders from the crossroads region. I heard about the needs for local psychiatric inpatient capacity and took action,” Kolkhorst said. “Right now, many of the individuals awaiting a placement for current mental health offerings in the region must be driven to Austin, San Antonio, or Houston.”

Funding for construction will be available in the current biennium, with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission working directly with county leaders to finalize details and plans for the facility.

State Representative Geanie Morrison (R-Victoria) praised the plan.

“I want to thank Senator Kolkhorst for her work on the budget to secure the funding for a mental health facility. The closest access for mental health beds in the Victoria area is currently over 100 miles away. This is extremely important for our citizens to receive the treatment that they need,” said Morrison.

Kolkhorst said Senate Bill 30 provides more than \$2.2 billion to construct new or replacement facilities in El Paso, Amarillo, Midland, Lubbock, the Rio Grande Valley, Beaumont, Terrell, Wichita Falls, and Conroe.

State health officials estimate that over 2,000 individuals are awaiting a forensic placement in a state hospital. Forensic beds are reserved for individuals involved in the justice system or legal proceedings. They also estimate that over 100 individuals currently await a civil mental health bed.

In developing a new statewide mental health plan, Senator Kolkhorst said she and fellow legislators sought to reduce the burdens on local jails and criminal justice systems.

Senator Kolkhorst also proposed a unique mechanism that allocates \$100 million in matching grants for local communities seeking to build additional customized facilities to provide more psychiatric capacity.

“Many communities around the state have developed thoughtful plans for specific facilities that suit their local needs,” said Kolkhorst “This new grant program will help them achieve their goals.”

Lawmakers also included historic funding increases for expansion of community mental health programs in the budget, including more than \$300 million for mental health community hospitals; \$199.4 million for mental health state hospital operations; and \$83 million for community mental health grant programs for jail diversion, adult and juvenile mental health services, and community collaboratives.

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