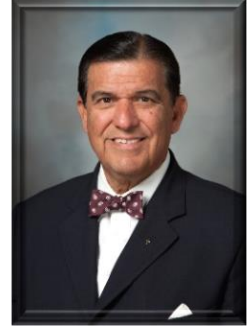




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PRESS RELEASE: Senator Lucio Reiterates Prior Request to Expand Medicaid in Texas *May 19th correspondence to Texas Governor Abbott released*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, May 21, 2020

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AUSTIN, TX – Today, Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr., (D-Brownsville) released correspondence he wrote to Texas Governor Greg Abbott requesting that Texas expand Medicaid coverage to help Texans better deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a follow-up to the April 14 Opinion Editorial, "A Strategic Texas Investment: Putting the Well-being of Texans First by Expanding Medicaid in Texas," covered by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Media in April.

In today's released letter, Sen. Lucio writes to the Governor stating, "Our state has asked much from Texans as it strived to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, promulgated state public health orders requiring those not engaging in essential services to stay at home took a toll on our families and state economy. Thousands of 'non-essential' businesses closed their doors which resulted in massive layoffs -- and as I argued on April 14 -- regrettably displaced workers lost their employer-based health insurance." Sen. Lucio's letter goes on to say, "The historic layoffs that have left thousands of Texans to fend for themselves to stay healthy and to take care of their families is devastating and unacceptable. That is why, with the utmost respect, I reiterate today the public request I made a month ago and implore you to help displaced workers, who lost their employer-based health insurance, by expanding Medicaid coverage in our state."

In last month's editorial, Sen. Lucio stated, "Knowing that before the COVID-19 outbreak, Texas had the highest rate of uninsured residents in the nation, it is reasonable to foresee that the great number of displaced workers will likely also cause similar bottlenecks for health care services in our public health system." The editorial was referencing the tremendous bottleneck of unemployment claims Texas experienced because of enormous amount of displaced workers. "Unfortunately, because laid off Texans also lost their work-based health insurance, many will be forced to rely on our hospitals and emergency rooms when they become sick. As a result, thousands of unemployed Texans lacking health coverage may likely strain, if not overwhelm, the very health care system that promulgated public health orders are aimed at protecting."

In April, Sen. Lucio maintained, "Just like our federal government rose above divisive ideologies to stand by Americans in need of help with the federal CARES Act, displaced and working-poor Texans are in need for the State of Texas to help them through the COVID-19 outbreak by providing them increased opportunities for affordable health coverage. That is why unemployed Texans, and their families, are asking the only statewide elected official who has the executive authority to increase health care opportunities by expanding Medicaid coverage in Texas."

In today's correspondence, Sen. Lucio reiterated his prior call to increase health care opportunities for Texans, "Now, as we are seeing historic unemployment and millions of Texans losing their employer-based health insurance, it is our state's turn to rise to the occasion." Sen. Lucio continued in today's released letter to Governor Abbott, "I hope

you agree that our constituents should not be asked to shoulder more of the devastating consequences of having had a closed state. Especially when our state can take immediate action to lessen their pain. That is why, with the utmost respect, I implore you to use your executive power to answer the call of millions of our constituents who are suffering in these most perilous times. As the governor of the great State of Texas, you have the power to be the beacon of hope that our constituents need in these challenging times by providing them the critical help they so desperately need by expanding Medicaid coverage in our state."

In the concluding paragraph of today's released correspondence, Sen. Lucio informed Governor Abbott, "By you expanding Medicaid coverage in our state, millions of Texans will know that our statewide leaders heard their cry and understand how much they have had to shoulder. Please reenergize the can-do spirit of Texans by showing our constituents that they have a governor who, with compassion, will do everything in his power to ensure that their resolve for a better tomorrow will not be broken, that their trust in government will not be weakened, and that their can-do spirit as Texans will not be diminished."

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Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D – Brownsville) represents Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Kleberg, and Willacy Counties. He is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education; Member of the Senate Committees on State Affairs; Veteran Affairs & Border Security; and of the Select Committees on Redistricting; and, Texas Ports. He is member of the Sunset Advisory Commission and has been an ex-officio member of the DSHS Task Force of Border Public Health Officials since 2017. Elected in 1991, Lucio is third in seniority in the Texas Senate.