



**METROPOLITAN
HEALTH DISTRICT**

2023

88th LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT



Executive Summary

In June of 2022, the Policy and Civic Engagement (PaCE) Office issued 3 policy briefs highlighting food insecurity, Medicaid expansion, and insulin price caps as pressing health concerns for San Antonio and recommended making them policy and legislative priorities for the City. Based on these recommendations, PaCE staff supported the Government Affairs Department (GA) in successfully incorporating food insecurity and Medicaid expansion into the City's legislative program for the 88th Texas Legislative Session. Staff collaborated with strategic partners, including the Bexar Health Coalition, The San Antonio Food Bank and Feeding America, the Texas Food Policy Roundtable, the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition, TACCHO, and the March of Dimes, to advocate for these and other health priorities during the legislative session. Session highlights include:

- HB 12 passed: allowing 12-month postpartum Medicaid coverage for new mothers.
- HB 1743 passed: supports people exiting the criminal legal system by allowing eligible individuals to apply for SNAP before their release so that they have access to food upon release.
- HB 1287 passed: makes a one-time inflationary adjustment to the Vehicle Asset Test to better reflect today's car values, reducing one barrier to families' accessing food assistance.

The 88th Texas Legislative Session convened on January 10, 2023, and adjourned on May 29, 2023. The session addressed a wide range of topics, such as education, healthcare, transportation, and taxation. GA identified 152 bills that were deemed relevant to public health and of interest to the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health).

	Total bills filed	Total bills passed	Bills Metro Health followed	MH bills that passed their original chamber	MH bills that passed both chambers	MH bills signed by Governor (as of June 19th)
House	5,413	744	96	30	11	10
Senate	2,633	502	56	16	11	10
Total	8,046	1,246	152	46	22	20

Twelve Months of Postpartum Medicaid

In 2021, during the 87th State Legislative Session, the Texas House passed a postpartum Medicaid bill that would extend coverage for postpartum women from 60 days to 12 months. In the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, a committee substitute that limited the extension to 6 months was filed. This committee substitute ultimately passed both Chambers and was signed into law by the Governor on June 15, 2021. In order to implement the six-month extension, Texas was required to submit a plan and seek approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In August 2022, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) announced that CMS would not approve the plan. In March 2023, House Speaker Dade Phelan announced that expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months was one of his policy priorities for the 88th State Legislative Session and Representative Toni Rose filed HB 12. This time, the 12-month postpartum Medicaid expansion for women whose pregnancies end in delivery or the natural loss of the child passed both Chambers and was signed by the Governor on June 18, 2023. Texas will be able to use the provision in the American Rescue Plan Act that allows states to use an expedited process, a state plan amendment (SPA), to implement the expansion. Extending postpartum Medicaid has been the top recommendation of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee for several years and will provide healthcare to nearly 400,000 women who are losing continuous postpartum coverage due to the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.¹

SNAP Improvements

Several bills filed by the legislature this year were related to access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In Texas, the vehicle asset test (VAT) previously limited the value of a family's first vehicle to \$15,000 and any subsequent vehicles to \$4,650. These numbers were last updated in 2001 and 1973, respectively. HB 1287 proposed annual adjustments to these numbers to account for inflation. In addition to HB 1287, other bills related to SNAP included HB 1743. HB 1743 provides early access to SNAP benefits to ensure that formerly incarcerated Texans are enrolled in and able to access SNAP upon their release. Immediate access to SNAP upon release supports the reentry process by allowing those leaving the criminal justice system to focus on finding a job and reuniting with family, reduces recidivism, and lowers incarceration costs for the state.² While both HB 1287 and HB 1743 easily passed in the House, there was a setback when they were referred to the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services. Initially, it did not seem like any SNAP bills would be heard by that committee. However, Senator César Blanco, who filed the companion bill to HB 1287 and sponsored HB 1287 in the Senate, was relentless in his requests that the SNAP bills be given a committee meeting. As a result, both HB 1287 and HB 1743 were heard in and voted out of the Committee on Health & Human Services. HB 1287 was amended to provide a one-time adjustment for inflation, rather than annual adjustments. The Governor signed both bills on June 12, 2023. HB 1743 went into effect immediately upon being signed, and HB 1287 will go into effect on September 1, 2023. In 2020, over 14% of people in Bexar County were food insecure, which was higher than the proportion across Texas overall.

¹ Spectrum News, "Gov. Abbott expected to sign postpartum Medicaid expansion bill," June 2023

² Feeding Texas, "Bipartisan Bill Allows Incarcerated Texans to Apply for SNAP before Release," February 2023

Introduction

SA Forward & PaCE

SA Forward is the strategic plan undertaken by the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) to protect and improve the health of our community so that all people thrive in healthy, safe communities. These initiatives strengthen our foundational capabilities to work in new ways to deepen our impact. Metro Health has identified the following six priority areas to be the focus of its strategic direction:

1. **Access to Care** - Access to affordable, quality health care is important to physical, social, and mental health. This priority area addresses systemic barriers to patient-centered health care.
2. **Data & Technology Infrastructure** - Updated data and technology infrastructure are essential to developing the foundational workforce and the advanced technological services required for robust, state-of-the-art public health interventions.
3. **Food Insecurity & Nutrition** - Food insecurity is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Addressing food insecurity starts with understanding the complex webs that make up food systems (production, processing, transport, and consumption), as well as the chronic disease burden often experienced by individuals with food insecurity. The initiatives in this priority area address the complex interplay between individuals, groups, community, and societal factors that have led to food insecurity and disproportionate chronic disease rates.
4. **Health Equity & Social Justice** - Health Equity and Social Justice initiatives are cross cutting and intended to strengthen the City's ecosystem by addressing structural racism and other factors such as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) that impact the health and wellbeing of all.
5. **Mental Health & Community Resilience** - Mental health problems are an increasingly large part of our community's burden of disease. To address this, we seek to ensure emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing through improved coordination of mental health services in our community.
6. **Violence Prevention** - Violence is an urgent public health problem. From infants to the elderly, violence affects everyone and can lead to chronic physical, emotional, and economic problems. Metro Health is committed to preventing violence so that people of all ages can lead safe and healthy lives.

The Policy and Civic Engagement (PaCE) Office was created in January 2022 to support strong cross sector partnerships and promote equitable health outcomes through policy and systems change initiatives. PaCE focuses on strengthening Metro Health's backbone support role, incubating policy and systems change efforts, cultivating a network of health advocates, and advancing healthy public policies in sectors beyond health.

To advance health equity through policy change at the state level, PaCE staff collaborated externally with several health advocacy coalitions. Internally, we convened a Public Health Policy Workgroup which included department wide subject matter experts that tracked state legislative priorities and policy trends, analyzed legislative proposals, and proposed policy action.

Metro Health Policy Priorities

In June of 2022, the Policy and Civic Engagement (PaCE) Office issued 3 policy briefs highlighting food insecurity, Medicaid expansion, and the high cost of insulin as pressing health concerns for San Antonio and recommended making them policy and legislative priorities for the City.

- 1. Food Insecurity:** Metro Health recommended supporting funding for services and programs that provide food assistance, increase access to nutritious foods, and promote food security. One in five children in Bexar County were food insecure in 2019, and the overall food insecurity rate was approximately 14%. Food insecurity is associated with several physical and mental health issues, such as heart disease, diabetes, anxiety, and depression, as well as a negative impact on cognitive development in children, which negatively affects learning and graduation rates. Food insecurity also disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic households.³
- 2. Medicaid Expansion:** Medicaid expansion was included in the City's 87th State Legislative Program in 2021, and Metro Health recommended supporting expanding Medicaid coverage again in 2023. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicaid enrollment increased by 20% due to the continuous coverage requirement.⁴ As many as 1.3 million Texans were expected to lose coverage when the Public Health Emergency ended, and Texas remains one of only ten states that has not adopted the Medicaid expansion. Expansion will save jobs by creating an economic stimulus, and save lives by encouraging check-ups, cancer screenings, and prescription refills.⁵ Expansion states also have reduced racial and ethnic disparities in access to care.
- 3. High Cost of Insulin:** In the 87th State Session, the legislature took some steps to address the high cost of insulin, and Metro Health recommended that the City support additional efforts to lower the cost of insulin in the 88th State Session, as well. Over 288,000 Bexar County residents reported being diagnosed with diabetes in 2019, with nearly a third requiring insulin to manage their disease. Insulin prices and individual expenditures can vary based on the type of insulin and health insurance coverage, ranging from \$0 to \$1,500 each year. Nearly 16% of those who require and use insulin pay the full price for their insulin prescription annually.

Based on these recommendations, PaCE staff supported the Government Affairs Department (GA) in successfully incorporating food insecurity and Medicaid expansion into the City's legislative program for the 88th State Legislative Session. Additional health and safety position statements that were included in the City's legislative program can be seen in Appendix A.

³ United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2019," 2020

⁴ Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families, "The Latest on Child Medicaid and CHIP Enrollment During the Pandemic," June 2022

⁵ Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, "States that Have Expanded Medicaid Are Better Positioned to Address COVID-19 and Recession," July 2020

Advocacy Partners & Allies

Metro Health collaborated with several advocacy partners and allies at the local and state levels, including the Bexar Health Coalition, The San Antonio Food Bank and Feeding America, the Texas Food Policy Roundtable (TFPR), the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC), the Texas Association of City and County Health Officials (TACCHO), and the March of Dimes, to advocate for the priorities listed above and other health priorities during the 88th State Legislative Session. These partners focus on a variety of policy areas, including behavioral health, city and county health department funding and infrastructure, women's access to reproductive care, maternal morbidity and mortality, and expansion of food assistance programs.

Legislative Overview

The 88th State Legislative Session convened on January 10, 2023, and adjourned on May 29, 2023. The session addressed a wide range of topics, including education, healthcare, transportation, and taxation. GA identified 152 bills that were deemed relevant to public health and of interest to Metro Health.

	Total bills filed	Total bills passed	Bills Metro Health followed	MH bills that passed their original chamber	MH bills that passed both chambers	MH bills signed by Governor (as of June 19th)
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In addition to the bills identified by GA, Metro Health tracked an additional 111 bills that were identified by advocacy partners and allies as priorities. A full list of these bills and the key events and dates for each can be found in Appendix B.

Metro Health Policy Recommendations

Food Insecurity

GA identified 14 bills related to food insecurity, accessibility, and affordability this session. Of those, three were of particular interest to Metro Health. HB 1287 allows for a one-time inflation adjustment for the maximum amount of a motor vehicle excluded in determining eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Vehicle Asset Test (VAT) places a limit on the value of the vehicles that a household may own and still qualify for the program. While many other states have eliminated the VAT in their eligibility considerations, Texas chooses to use the VAT in addition to income and family size as eligibility criteria for SNAP. The SNAP VAT previously placed a \$15,000 limit for the value of a family's first vehicle and a \$4,650 limit on the value of any subsequent vehicles owned by the family. These values have not been updated since 2001 and 1973, respectively. Because the VAT has not accounted for inflation and cost of living, HB 1287 was intended to modernize the SNAP VAT by applying an inflationary adjustment to the current limit. After negotiations between the House and the Senate, the Senate amended HB 1287 to apply just one adjustment, instead of an annual adjustment. Metro Health supported this bill, and it was signed by the Governor on June 12, 2023. HB 1287 will become effective on September 1, 2023.

Metro Health also supported HB 1743, which requires the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to notify the Health and Human Services Commission of inmates being discharged or released at least 45 days in advance to allow for time to apply to SNAP on their behalf. Formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely than the general population to have had experiences with unemployment, unstable housing, and chronic health conditions. Upon reentry, many of these challenges not only persist, but are amplified due to stigma associated with having a criminal record. In conjunction with other essential social services, prompt access to basic needs like adequate nutrition is critical to decrease the risk of recidivism.⁶ Allowing people who are incarcerated to pre-register for SNAP benefits prior to release not only gives individuals a better chance at finding and retaining quality employment and attaining self-sufficiency, but greatly reduces their risk of experiencing food insecurity. HB 1743 was signed by the Governor on June 12, 2023, and became effective immediately.

Finally, HB 1501 and its Senate companion, SB 557, would have extended SNAP coverage to certain college students. Prior to the pandemic, studies showed that college students experience higher rates of food insecurity than non-student US households. More recently, surveys show that 38 percent of students in two-year colleges and 29 percent of students at four-year colleges reported experiencing hunger.⁷ Streamlining the SNAP eligibility of certain students enrolled in a postsecondary educational institution would help nourish students as they work towards a future of economic self-sufficiency and wellbeing. Metro Health supported these bills. Unfortunately, neither HB 1501 nor SB 557 received a hearing in its originating chamber.

⁶Wolkomir, Elizabeth. "How SNAP Can Better Serve the Formerly Incarcerated." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 16 Mar. 2018

⁷"Food Insecurity On College Campuses: The Invisible Epidemic", Health Affairs Forefront, January 31, 2022

Medicaid Expansion

In the 87th Legislative Session, the House passed a bill that would extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to twelve months. The Senate amended that bill to extend coverage to six months. The state submitted an implementation plan to the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), but the plan was not approved. In March of this year, Speaker of the House Dade Phelan announced that postpartum Medicaid expansion would be one of his policy priorities for this session. HB 12 was passed and signed by the Governor on June 18, 2023. HB 12 extends postpartum coverage to 12 months for pregnancies that end in a live birth or involuntary miscarriage. This extension was a top priority for the Texas Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee in their two most recent reports.

Unfortunately, despite there being nearly ten filed bills with a variety of different approaches, full Medicaid expansion was not considered in this session. Texas remains one of ten states that have not adopted the Medicaid expansion (North Carolina has adopted but not yet implemented the expansion). When the public health emergency ended in March 2023, Medicaid continuous coverage ended as well. So far, 500,000 Texans have lost their coverage, mostly due to procedural disenrollment, meaning that the State terminated coverage without reviewing eligibility.⁸ The impact of this unwinding shows how necessary the Medicaid expansion is for this state. Metro Health will continue to watch and support Medicaid expansion in the future.

High Cost of Insulin

In the 87th State Session, the Legislature successfully passed two bills related to the cost of insulin. First, Texas became one of 19 states to legislatively address insulin prices when SB 827 was passed, limiting out-of-pocket co-pays to \$25 for each insulin prescription per month for insured Texans on state-regulated health plans. The law went into effect on September 1, 2021. Second, HB 18 established the Texas Cares Rx Program, a prescription drug savings program for the uninsured. The bill had the potential to lower the cost of drugs such as insulin by up to 70%. The expected program rollout was scheduled for early 2023.

In the 88th Session, the legislature passed a bill that will attempt to hold insulin distributors accountable for their insulin prices. SB 241 would require manufacturers to state, in writing, whether the unavailability of the generic alternative is due, in part or in whole, to: “a scheme by the manufacturer to pay a generic prescription drug manufacturer to delay marketing the generic drug; a legal or business strategy to extend the life of a patent on the brand name prescription drug; the manufacturer directly manipulating a patent on the brand name prescription drug; or the manufacturer facilitating one of the actions previously described on behalf of another entity.” SB 241 was signed by the Governor on May 27, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1, 2024.

⁸ Texas Tribune, “500,000 Texans have been dropped from the Medicaid rolls since April,” July 2023

Other Metro Health Priority Areas

Mental Health & Community Resilience

The Mental Health priority secured two major legislative victories for our community. The first, HB 2059, expands funding and eligibility for the State's Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training program. MHFA teaches individuals how to offer initial support to those experiencing a mental health crisis until professional help arrives. Signed on June 2, 2023, this bill addresses the growing demand for MHFA training by providing cost-free training to a wider audience, including youth, first responders, and military service members and veterans.

The second bill, SB 1319, requires doctors or hospital administrators to report all treated overdoses to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and to the local public health or law enforcement authority, who may only use that data for overdose mapping. Overdose mapping provides valuable insights into the issue and helps identify areas where local governments can concentrate their resources for relief and intervention. However, there is a concern that the focus of this initiative is primarily on law enforcement agencies, rather than EMS agencies. SB 1319 was signed by the Governor on May 24, 2023.

Both bills will go into effect on September 1, 2023.

Violence Prevention

Several filed bills could enhance the protections of victims and survivors. SB 49 was signed by the Governor on May 19, 2023, and is designed to expand access to the Crime Victims' Compensation fund by expanding eligibility for household members of victims and enhancing relocation compensation and lost wages for family members of deceased victims. This bill will go into effect on September 1, 2023. SB 1325, signed into law on May 13, 2023, and effective immediately, requires the Texas Health & Human Services Commission to develop a written notice of services that are available to victims of domestic violence that officers could share with victims when they respond to incidents. The notice will include information on organizations that can help with safety planning, shelter, and protection as well as information on victims' legal rights.

One topic this legislature did not touch on was mitigating gun violence in the community. Despite the opportunity to prohibit individuals convicted of family violence from owning a gun through HB 2076, the bill was left pending in committee in early March. Additionally, HB 123 would have established extreme risk protective orders to temporarily restrict access to guns for individuals determined to be at an elevated risk of harming themselves or others. HB 123 did not receive a committee hearing.

Housing

This legislative session witnessed the introduction of several bills that addressed housing stability challenges and would increase access to affordable housing for vulnerable populations. Notably, HB 4186 and its Senate companion, SB 2456, would require housing authorities to prioritize affordable housing access for youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

HB 2244 called for the creation of a pilot project that would leverage Medicaid to offer supportive housing services to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Lastly, HB 3628 aimed to establish a streamlined process for informing housing assistance applicants about their eligibility for other public assistance programs. Despite the State's worsening housing crisis, none of these bills received a hearing in their originating chamber. However, in a rare move impacting low-income renters, HB 1193 was successfully passed during the session. HB 1193 prohibits housing discrimination by a property owners' association against a residential tenant based on the tenant's method of payment. This includes the use of Section 8 rental vouchers, rental assistance or rental subsidies. Beginning September 1, 2023, this practice will be illegal.

Housing stability is a critical component of a thriving community and plays a significant role in shaping individuals' overall well-being. Access to safe, affordable, and quality housing is closely linked to improved physical and mental health outcomes, better educational attainment, and increased economic security. Stable housing also contributes to lower rates of homelessness and reduced dependence on emergency support systems. Metro Health remains committed to advocating for legislation that promotes housing stability and alleviates financial burdens for individuals and families.

Other GA Bills

COVID-19 & Public Health Authority

Governor Abbott identified “ending COVID-19 restrictions forever” as one of his policy priorities for the session. Many of the COVID-19-related bills also touched on public health authority, and GA identified some notable bills to track. One such bill, SB 29, aims to prohibit mask mandates, business or school closure mandates, and vaccine mandates to control COVID-19. SB 29 passed and was signed by the Governor on June 2, 2023. However, prior to its passage, the House proposed a committee substitute that allowed exceptions to the mask mandates in certain facilities and stated that the prohibition on vaccine mandates only applied to the extent that it did not conflict with rules put forward by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The Senate refused to concur with the changes that the House proposed, and a conference committee was called. However, the final version of the bill matched the version put forward by the House. SB 29 was signed into law on June 2, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1, 2023.

Vaccines

Several bills, such as SB 1024, were designed to modify school immunization requirements and shift the authority to modify that list from the Department of State Health Services to the Legislature. SB 1024 went even further, prohibiting COVID-19 mandates on masks, vaccines, and business or school closures and discrimination based on COVID-19 vaccination status. These rules would have limited the ability of the state health department and local health authorities to protect the health of their communities. Ultimately, SB 1024 was voted out of the Senate, but did not receive a hearing in the House Committee on Public Health.

Another highly debated bill related to vaccines was HB 1105. This bill was intended to permanently extend the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) authority that allows pharmacists to order and administer vaccines for individuals ages 3 and up. While this change would not directly impact Metro Health, it would increase access to vaccinations. The House passed HB 1105 without any changes, but the Senate added much of the language from SB 1024 in a committee substitute. On the Senate floor, some of the committee substitute language was removed, leaving only COVID-specific items related to mask, vaccine, and closure mandates, healthcare facility discrimination against employees who are not yet vaccinated against COVID, and employer discrimination against people who are not yet vaccinated against COVID. The House refused to concur with those changes and requested a conference committee, but the Senate did not agree. As a result, HB 1105 did not reach the Governor's desk.

Food & Environmental

Notable bills in the Food & Environmental (F&E) area include SB 577, SB 829, and HB 2878. SB 829 would prohibit local government authorities from mandating licenses for cottage food production, permit certain cottage food sales on a wholesale basis, and allow cottage food vendors to directly sell to consumers. Metro Health opposed this bill due to concerns regarding the sale of products from non-licensed kitchens to larger facilities, which violates food safety regulations and poses health risks if proper storage is not ensured. Additionally, if passed, the bill would have created confusion during routine food safety inspections at licensed establishments, as local health departments would be unable to enforce licenses or permits for cottage food production. This bill was passed out of the Senate but did not receive a hearing in the House.

SB 577 requires the city and/or county to maintain an online registry of orders for food establishments, regulates fees for establishments serving alcoholic beverages, and establishes noise regulations, among other provisions. Metro Health opposed this bill because it prohibits charging fees for food manager certificates, resulting in a negative fiscal impact on the F&E division. In the last fiscal year, F&E issued 1,056 food manager certificates, generating \$16,315 in revenue. This fiscal year, 305 certificates have been issued, amounting to just over \$4,700. The bill was signed by the Governor on May 27, 2023, and will also become effective on September 1, 2023.

HB 2878 shifts the licensing of mobile vendors to the County and allows mobile vendors to operate in any municipality in the county in which they are licensed. Since the City of San Antonio is located within Bexar County, all mobile vendors would fall into this category. Metro Health opposed this bill. There are some remaining questions about whether it would apply to Bexar County and Metro Health, as the bill was framed to target a few specific counties, but, if HB 2878 does apply to Metro Health, it would have a significant negative fiscal impact on the department. In fiscal year 2022, the City's mobile vending revenue totaled to \$275,937.00. Since the beginning of fiscal year 2023, the mobile vending revenue is \$161,504.00. This bill would prevent the F&E division from generating any further revenue from mobile vending. It was signed by the Governor on June 13, 2023, and will take effect on September 1, 2023.

Public Center on Environmental Health

Bills that could influence the work done by the Public Center on Environmental Health include HB 2460, SB 813, and SB 471. HB 2460 requires the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to obtain or develop updated water availability models for six separate river basins. SB 813 requires TCEQ to alert legislators of major enforcement actions taken against polluters in their districts. The Public Center on Environmental Health supported both of these bills. HB 2460 was signed by the Governor on May 24, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed SB 813 on June 18, 2023, stating that it would add bureaucratic duties to what is already required. SB 471 allows TCEQ to fine citizens who request multiple environmental complaints that don't result in enforcement. The bill gives TCEQ the discretion to decide when to pursue fines and the amounts of the fees. Experts are concerned that this will deter citizens from filing complaints, and the Public Center on Environmental Health opposed this bill. Governor Abbott signed this bill into law on June 18, 2023, and it will go into effect on September 1 of this year.

State Preemption

One significant bill that was not strictly related to public health was HB 2127, also known as the Texas Regulatory Consistency Act. This bill provides the State with exclusive authority over activity contained in the Agricultural Code, Finance Code, Insurance Code, Labor Code, Natural Resources Code, and Occupations Code, preventing county and municipal government from developing local ordinances that go further than what's allowed under state law. The bill supporters argue that it will streamline regulations across the state. However, the language in the bill is very broad and it is unclear which local ordinances will be impacted. The Legislature made few amendments to this bill, although exemptions for local puppy mill ordinances that were implemented before April 1, 2023, and ordinances regulating the conduct of credit service organizations were added. While most of the impacted Codes would not affect Metro Health, the Property Code was amended to include ordinances regulating evictions, delivery of notices to vacate, and related lawsuits as ordinances that could be preempted by the State. As mentioned previously, the language is vague and the full impact of the bill is unknown, but preemption of ordinances like these could have an impact on Metro Health's work on housing stability.

Governor Abbott signed HB 2127 into law on June 14, 2023, and it will go into effect on September 1, 2023. On July 3, 2023, the City of Houston sued the State to block the law from going into effect. On July 24, 2023, the City of San Antonio announced that they would also be suing the State over HB 2127.

Advocacy Partner Interests

Bexar Health Coalition

Many of the bills the Bexar Health Coalition followed were also bills that GA identified for Metro Health. Other priority bills for this group include HB 300 and HB 1578. HB 300 establishes a tax exemption for family care products, including child and adult diapers, feminine hygiene products, and maternity clothing. HB 300 was left pending in the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, but a similar Senate bill, SB 379, was signed into law on June 18, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1.

HB 1578, which would require the State to develop a health literacy plan, was a top priority for Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM), a member of the Bexar Health Coalition. MHM had previously attempted to have this bill passed in the 87th Session and had worked closely with Bexar County legislators to rewrite and refile in this session. Unfortunately, while it passed in the House, HB 1578 did not receive a hearing in the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services.

Texas Association of City & County Health Officials

Many of the bills TACCHO was tracking overlapped with bills that GA identified for Metro Health. Additional bills of interest to this group include HB 44, HB 81 and its companion SB 177, and HB 4758. HB 44 prohibits healthcare providers from choosing to not provide care to Medicaid or child health insurance plan (CHIP) enrollees based on their COVID-19 immunization status. HB 44 was signed into law on June 12, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1. HB 81 and SB 177 would have required informed consent before certain treatments or vaccinations for COVID-19. This bill also had the potential to limit how providers could speak to their patients about the COVID-19 vaccine. Ultimately, neither HB 81 nor SB 177 were heard on the House floor. Finally, HB 4758 prohibits e-cigarette manufacturers from packaging e-cigarettes in containers depicting cartoon-like characters, images of celebrities, or images of food-like candy or juice. This type of packaging is a direct appeal to children, and this bill aims to reduce the number of youths that use e-cigarettes. HB 4758 was signed by the Governor on June 17, 2023, and will go into effect on January 1, 2024.

Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition

A top priority for the TWHC was the postpartum Medicaid expansion covered by HB 12. Other priority bills for this coalition included HB 141 and HB 916. HB 141 was intended to require CHIP to cover contraceptive drugs. Texas is one of only two states that does not cover contraception under CHIP. Unfortunately, HB 141 did not receive a committee hearing. Another contraceptive-related bill, HB 916, gives women the ability to obtain a 12-month supply of prescription contraceptive drugs at one time. This bill will increase access to contraception, especially for women living in rural areas. HB 916 was signed into law by Governor Abbott on June 9, 2023, and will be effective on September 1, 2023.

March of Dimes

March of Dimes 2023 policy priorities included increased access to quality health care, supporting women and babies, and improving research and surveillance. HB 12 was a priority for this group, as well. In addition to HB 12, March of Dimes was supportive of bills like HB 852, which adds a community member, a physician specializing in emergency care, a physician specializing in cardiology, a physician specializing in anesthesiology, a physician specializing in oncology, and a representative of a managed care organization to the Texas Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee. HB 852 was signed by the Governor on June 12, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1, 2023.

Texas Food Policy Roundtable

In addition to the SNAP improvement bills, TFPR supported HB 2836 and HB 3599. HB 2836 would allow a 12-month certification for SNAP but did not receive a hearing in the House Committee on Human Services. HB 3599 provides food banks with an exemption from state transportation-related taxes and fees, including fuel taxes and registrations for their fleets. This will allow food banks to reinvest those costs in their communities. HB 3599 was signed into law on June 10, 2023, and will go into effect on September 1, 2023.



Appendix A

City of San Antonio State Legislative Program

In November 2022, San Antonio City Council approved the City's 88th Legislative Program. The program included four pillars and 26 position statements. The four pillars were Protection of Community Interests, Economic & Community Development, Public Health & Safety, and Infrastructure & Resiliency.

Under the Public Health & Safety pillar, GA included seven position statements. Of those seven, six were directly related to work done by Metro Health:

- Support legislation that improves access to reproductive healthcare, provides supportive services for the health and safety of mothers and children, and eliminates barriers to healthcare services for all San Antonians.
- Support Medicaid expansion to provide health insurance to low-income Texans.
- Support additional funding for services and programs that provide food assistance, increase access to nutritious foods, and promote food security.
- Support improved state funding and access to comprehensive and timely mental health care in Texas.
- Support responsible firearm safety policies and additional resources to help mitigate gun violence in our community.
- Support efforts to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and enhance the protection of survivors/victims.
- The City's **full legislative agenda** can be found on the Government Affairs Department website.

Appendix B

Bill Tracking

To explore the details, summary, and relevant dates for the bills that Metro Health tracked through the 88th State Legislative Session, visit the [2023 Legislative Tracking & Recommendations](#). To navigate, use the tabs at the bottom.



**METROPOLITAN
HEALTH DISTRICT**