

Senate Finance Committee

TESTIMONY OF OLGA GARZA KAUFFMAN

February 6, 2019

My name is Olga Garza Kauffman. I am a health specialist for Urban Strategies Inc. in San Antonio. Founded in 1978, Urban Strategies is a national non-profit that works to empower families in distressed urban core neighborhoods to lead healthy, prosperous lives in self-sustaining, thriving communities.

At Urban Strategies, I help families navigate the healthcare system so they can get the care they need. While most children have access to healthcare coverage through Medicaid/CHIP, the majority of parents fall into the Medicaid Gap; and unfortunately, we get to see up close what this really means for our fellow Texans and their children.

In our work, we have seen the mothers I've worked with die because of the lack of health insurance. All of these mother have died much too young and they have all left children and families who are distraught with their loss and are forever changed. You see, when parents die due to the lack of health insurance, it impacts more than just the individual; it impacts the whole family. Two sets of children from these mothers are now being raised by their grandparents and the third set are trying to make it alone – with two young adult sisters raising their 15 year old brother.

One mother had cancer and despite finally getting her chemotherapy services at University Health System, the illness was too far gone and she passed, leaving two precious 9 and 15 year old boys behind. She was 31 years old.

One mother worked tirelessly in jobs that never provided healthcare coverage and passed after an amputation for uncontrolled diabetes. Her beautiful children are now trying to make it on their own at much too young an age.

The third mother had difficulty controlling severe hypertension and because she was unable to get the care and medication she needed, she died of a stroke at 30 years old and leaves three children behind.

Our policy decisions have consequences. Every day we leave nearly a million low wage Texans without insurance, we impact not only their health and life but the lives of all those around them. The only time we see adult women get coverage is when they get pregnant and that coverage lasts less than one year. You should not have to get pregnant in Texas in order to receive medical care.

I ask that you take the bold steps necessary to ensure that all Texans in all industries and at all income levels are able to get the health care they need. This issue is urgent and we cannot wait.

**Olga Garza Kauffman, Health Specialist**

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