



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD
SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Lt. Governor Patrick, Senator Schwertner, and Senate
Republicans Take a Stand Against Medicaid Expansion in Texas**

In a letter to Obama, Senate Republicans make it clear that without flexibility to reform the state's existing Medicaid program, any expansion discussions are off the table.

AUSTIN, TX -- Today, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown), and members of the Senate Republican Caucus held a press conference to discuss the rapidly-growing cost of Texas Medicaid, and make it clear that without flexibility to reform the state's existing Medicaid program, any discussion of Medicaid expansion is a non-starter in the Texas Senate.

"In a letter sent this morning to President Obama, the Senate Republican Caucus has outlined a number of flexibilities centered around the principles of accountability and personal responsibility, which we feel are paramount to the enactment of any truly cost-effective and sustainable health care reform," said Schwertner. "These kinds of solutions will allow Texas the independence to more effectively manage its Medicaid program and better serve its citizens."

"It is fitting that we are issuing this message to Washington on Texas Independence Day," said Lt. Governor Dan Patrick. "As federal mandates, like Medicaid, continue to burden our state's economy, it is important to remember that we are a nation of independent states that can resist Obamacare style federal mandates. I applaud Senator Schwertner, and the other Senators, for standing strong for Texas."

Texas Medicaid is a jointly-funded state and federal program intended to provide health care to some of Texas' most vulnerable citizens, specifically: the disabled, the elderly, pregnant women, and children. In 1989, the Texas Medicaid program represented approximately 12% of the Texas budget. This year, Medicaid is expected to consume more than 29% of the state budget, growing at a rate two-and-a-half times faster than any other aspect of state government.

"As the cost of Medicaid continues its upward climb, it places an ever-increasing pressure on the Texas budget -- diverting funds that could otherwise be used to support public safety, build new roads, and provide quality education for our children," continued Schwertner. "It should be clear that our current trajectory is unsustainable."

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The Texas Medicaid program has also been marked by dramatic caseload growth in recent years, from just over 2.1 million individuals served as recently as 2002, to over 4 million individuals currently enrolled in the program. During that period, the number of physicians accepting new Medicaid patients has declined to just 34%.

"Let me be clear, until we receive the kind of federal flexibility we're calling for here today -- the kind needed to fundamentally reform Texas Medicaid in a way that preserves this program for our most vulnerable Texans -- any expansion of Medicaid in Texas is simply not worth discussing."

In November 2014, 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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