May 30, 2019

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Texas Capitol, Room 28.1
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott:

On behalf of the Texas Public Health Coalition, representing more than 30 member organizations dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion, we congratulate you, your staff, and members of the 86th Texas Legislature on a successful session. Our coalition is pleased that several critical, bipartisan pieces of public health legislation have reached your desk.

First, we thank you for already signing three significant bills. House Bill 39 sustaining the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, and House bills 1418 and 1256 minimizing infectious disease risk among our state’s first responders.

We write to emphasize support for additional public health bills awaiting your signature. With your pen, you have the power to save lives and keep millions of Texans healthy and safe, now and into the future. Our coalition strongly urges you to sign the following bills into law:

- **Senate Bill 21** raises the minimum age of sale for tobacco and e-cigarette products from 18 to 21 for most Texans. SB 21 will help keep nicotine products away from school-age youth, preventing lifelong addiction, costly tobacco-related disease, and premature death.

- **House Bill 1848** enhances infection prevention and control programs in nursing homes to include protocols for rapid influenza testing and limiting the spread of dangerous multidrug resistant organisms. Nursing home residents are highly susceptible to infectious disease.

- **Senate Bill 1834** authorizes a pilot incentive program for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients to purchase Texas-grown produce. SB 1834 promotes healthy, nutritious choices among a population disproportionately affected by obesity.

- **Senate Bill 952** brings Texas child care facility licensing standards in line with science-backed national guidelines for nutrition, physical activity, and screen time. SB 952 ensures all Texas kids in child care benefit from the same sound, basic approach to child well-being.

- **House Bill 3552** institutes a required 60-day written notice for any proposed reduction or termination of community water fluoridation. Water fluoridation is proven to prevent tooth decay and oral disease, and plans to eliminate it should be transparent to the public.

- **House Bill 455** directs school districts to adopt their own official recess policies. Recess policies protect kids’ opportunities to stay physically active at school, while positively impacting classroom behavior and academic achievement.

- **House Bill 448** keeps children under age 2 safe by requiring that they ride in a rear-facing car seat. Motor vehicle accidents are a leading cause of accidental death for children, and front-facing seats increase risk for potentially fatal injury.

Finally, we encourage you to retain two Department of State Health Services (DSHS) budget provisions: DSHS Rider 29 analyzing the economic costs of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, and DSHS Rider 30 allowing certain Medicare-D patients to receive vaccines from the Adult Safety Net program.

When Texans are healthy, our state can remain prosperous. We hope you will agree the public health legislation before you represents a momentous step forward for the well-being of every Texan and deserves your signature. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration, and our coalition stands ready to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully yours,

John Carlo, MD
Chair, Texas Public Health Coalition