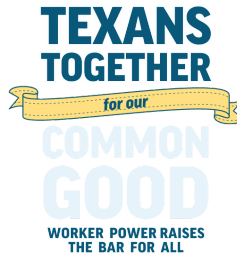




EVERY TEXAN



As we prepare for the holiday season, hundreds of thousands of Texans in need face unnecessary delays accessing food and health care assistance due to state paperwork backlogs. Due to Governor Abbott's and the Texas Legislature's systemic underfunding of public services and the state workforce, Texas families struggling to make ends meet currently face up to a 6 month delay in receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid benefits. It costs all of us when our family and neighbors cannot access the secure food and affordable health care they need to thrive. Only Governor Abbott is positioned to respond to this crisis with the urgent and meaningful actions needed. If he fails to do so, hard-working, low-wage Texas families will continue to face food insecurity and delays in health care, not only during Christmas and well into the New Year.

This Texas-size crisis requires a systemic solution. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC's) top leadership announced their efforts to address the public benefits backlog crisis by moving state eligibility workers around, from focusing on one type of assistance to another, and by giving current eligibility workers additional training over the next 5 months. Agency leadership even offered raffle prizes to incentivize state employees to work more overtime through the holiday season; this is on top of a mandatory overtime that every Texas eligibility worker has been subject to since 2020. These steps are insufficient and will not resolve this system-level crisis.

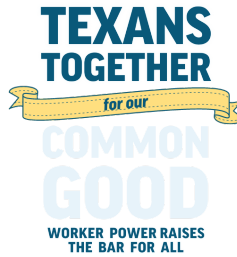
Governor Abbott must direct immediate and significant policy changes to ensure Texas' children get food and health care without delay. Texas is a prosperous state. It is unacceptable that so many Texan families go without needed food assistance at any time of year, but we cannot accept the gravity of this current crisis during the holiday season—a time of year to demonstrate compassion and care for our neighbors.

Today, we ask Governor Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission leadership to take two immediate actions to help resolve this crisis as quickly as possible. These actions would immediately and substantially reduce the workload of the eligibility system, so that HHSC can dig out of the backlogs, while helping ensure that Texans in need can eat and access health care.

1. Request temporary federal waivers to extend benefits to Texans up for renewal in SNAP and children's Medicaid. Texas extended SNAP benefits several times in the last 3 years due to backlogs and delays, and other states have extended children's Medicaid.



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2. Take immediate steps to streamline eligibility processes. Texas should quickly remedy its worst-in-the-nation failure rate for data-driven Medicaid renewals and adopt a 12-month certification period for SNAP.

The Texas legislature's systemic underfunding of our state government and workforce is at the root of this crisis, rendering agencies' staffing, technology, and processes insufficient for today's workload. Moving forward, we must invest in the state staff and systems that form the foundation for meeting food and health care needs of eligible Texans by processing eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid. This current crisis at HHSC is exacerbated by high staff turnover that must be addressed during the 2025 legislature. As an agency, HHSC experiences one of the highest annual staff turnover rates at 29%- the highest rate in 30 years. We surveyed the state workforce in 2023 and found that low pay and poor working conditions are driving state workers from their jobs. While paperwork delays and backlogs at HHSC have grown in recent months, hungry Texan families have faced SNAP benefit delays for more than two-and-a-half years.

We are grateful to Governor Abbott for his verbal commitment to address the unnecessary backlogs and SNAP benefit delays impacting so many SNAP-eligible families. However, the Governor's verbal commitment is insufficient if it is not followed up with immediate and sufficient action to end backlogs. All Texan families, from Amarillo to McAllen, should be able to enjoy this holiday season free from hunger. We ask the Governor to uphold our shared Texan values of care and compassion for our neighbors through his swift action to guarantee eligible, hungry families access to food by Christmas.

Every Texan

Texas State Employees Union CWA Local 6186

Texans Together for Our Common Good