



Statement
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New Texas Poverty and Uninsured Numbers Make the Path Forward Clear

Work to reduce poverty and the number of uninsured must continue

(Austin, Texas)—The Center for Public Policy Priorities released the following statement today regarding the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey:

“We are encouraged by the Census Bureau’s preliminary report that more Texans have the security of health insurance coverage. The data show the overall uninsured rate slightly improved thanks to the Affordable Care Act.

“But U.S. Census Bureau data show the number of Texans living in poverty remains stubbornly high and unacceptable.

“The preliminary data on the percentage of Texans living in poverty fell by one percentage point to 17.4 percent, which is within the margin of error. Texas has the 6th highest rate in the country, and it remains higher than a decade ago and before the Great Recession. The preliminary state poverty data show nearly one in six Texans lived in poverty in 2011, which is more than 4.4 million people. Nationwide, one in seven lived in poverty. Not only is Texas’ poverty rate higher than the U.S. rate, it has remained so for 30 years.

“While the rate did decrease, nearly one in four Texans went without health care coverage, still the highest uninsured rate in the nation. Texas now has the second worst uninsured rate for children behind Nevada. The data also show that the overall rate of uninsured Texans decreased from 24.6 percent in 2010 to 23.8 percent in 2011. This improvement is largely the result of the Affordable Care Act provision that allows young adults to remain on their parents’ private health insurance and the important role Medicaid and CHIP play in the lives of Texas children.

“Clearly, the public sector plays an important role in the lives of Texans. Public policies like the Affordable Care Act are starting to bring down the number of uninsured Texans, and we should move forward with expanding Medicaid to cover about 1.5 million more working age Texans.

“Looking beyond the numbers, there are still too many Texas families struggling to get by and get ahead, and we must increase our efforts to invest in their futures.

“While Texas added about 250,000 jobs in 2011, 269,000 Texans were unemployed so long that they ran out of unemployment benefits, and many stopped actively looking for work. Also, working Texans are more likely to have low-wage jobs than workers in almost every other state, and we lost 53,000 state and



local jobs because of state budget cuts. Texas has the third highest percentage of low-wage jobs in the country, which is more low-wage jobs than California, Florida, and Arizona combined.

“A high percentage of low-wage jobs means jobs without benefits, including health care coverage. Fewer than half of Texans get coverage through their job or a family member’s job. Too many Texans lack access to affordable health care coverage, hurting their ability to get by and get ahead. Texas children in low-income and poor families have public insurance options, but adults do not. Fortunately, the Affordable Care Act gives Texas the opportunity to take a giant step forward by making affordable coverage available in 2014 to Texans all along the income scale who do not have job-based insurance available to them.

“Just having a job is not enough for Texas families – they deserve higher paying jobs with health benefits, as well as the opportunity for a quality education for their children. Texas still has much work to do to make our state a place that’s better for all of us. If we want Texas to be a place of opportunity for everyone, we cannot continue to prioritize short-term budgetary solutions that create a low-skill, high poverty workforce and erode the services that protect our health and nutrition. We must work for a better Texas for all of us, building career pathways to good jobs and increasing postsecondary completion, as well as insuring more Texans through the Affordable Care Act.”

For More Information

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Brian Stephens at stephens@cphp.org or 512.320.0222, ext. 112.

About the Center

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to make a better Texas. You can learn more about the Center at CPPP.org.

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