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News Release

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Uninsured Populations Climbing Statewide Long Range Forecast: Metro Areas Hit Hardest

Austin (TX) – New data released today from the Texas Health Institute indicates the growing struggle of Texans to attain health coverage will continue to worsen through the year 2040. While some rural areas of the state are predicted to show decreases in the rate of uninsured, urban communities will see increases of up to 37 percent in Texans with no health coverage.

The Texas Health Institute report, created by the Texas State Data Center, analyzes population trends and rates of uninsured forecasts over a 35-year period. The report notes from the data, rural population declines in many areas of the state. As population numbers decrease in rural areas, so do the number of uninsured Texans living in those areas.

The greatest shift in uninsured rates in Texas appear in Metropolitan Statistical Areas, (MSAs) – the largest percentages of change occurring in Beaumont (37.5%), Waco (34.6%), Tyler (32.5%), Dallas-Ft. Worth (30.1%), Longview (29.4%) and Houston (25.2%).

These increases in uninsured Texans will create an even greater financial and operational burden on regional medical centers across the state says Dr. Roland Goertz, Waco family practice physician and President of the McLennan County Medical Education and Research Foundation. "These projections by the State Demographer are extremely concerning for safety net providers like community health centers. Not only does Texas need to address health insurance issues, we also need to invest in infrastructure improvements and the healthcare workforce," said Goertz, who also serves as clinical professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. "Without recognizing these imperatives we will be facing a crisis of access to care, not just for the uninsured, but for all."

While health care providers are already experiencing the financial effects of uninsured care, they are not alone in feeling the pinch. As insurance costs continue to rise in Texas, small businesses are struggling to provide insurance coverage to their employees. Many employers are passing cost increases along to their workers. Texas families now pay more than the national average in premium costs while one-in-four Texans remain uninsured.

In recognition of *Cover The Uninsured Week*, April 27-May 3, Texas Health Institute, a non-profit health policy think-tank, is recommending twelve uninsured policy solutions which would extend health care coverage to 2.7 million Texans, creating 90,000 new jobs throughout the state. "Texas Health Institute recognizes the costs for statewide coverage are great - \$1.6 billion of state funds annually and a federal match of \$1.7 billion – however, the salvation of our health care system and employment benefits to Texans will greatly offset annual costs," said Camille D. Miller, THI President and CEO. "We have an opportunity to alter the uninsured forecast of our state and set a new course for improving the health of all Texans. The time to implement effective solutions is now."

During *Cover The Uninsured Week*, Texas Health Institute is participating in a number of events to bring attention to the uninsured issue. A community workshop in San Angelo, a health conference in Arlington and a presentation to Texas legislators and other stakeholders in Austin will highlight the release of the new uninsured projections and the health care solutions THI has developed with the help of community and health care leaders across the state.

The Texas Health Institute's *Uninsured Data Report* and twelve uninsured policy solutions included in the brochure *Raising The Bar on Health Solutions* are now available online at www.texashealthinstitute.org. Report underwriting provided by Methodist Health Ministries.

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About the Texas Health Institute

The Texas Health Institute (THI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to finding feasible solutions to Texas' health policy problems. The mission of THI is to provide leadership to improve the health of Texans and their communities through education, research and health policy development. By providing a non-biased, non-partisan approach to the overall health and well-being of Texans, THI is able to create sound strategies and viable solutions to some of our state's most pressing health issues. Working together with community leaders, healthcare providers and consumers, policy makers, Texas Health Institute is Raising The Bar on solutions to create a healthier Texas.