



RYAN GUILLEN
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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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GUILLEN BILL EXPANDS RURAL TEXANS' MEDICAL CARE
HB 1697 Creates a Pediatric Health Tele-Connection Resource Program

AUSTIN - Texas State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) is an author of HB 1697, a bill that would establish a pediatric health tele-connectivity resource program for rural Texas. On **Thursday, April 6**, HB 1697 was engrossed in the House, and on **Friday, April 19**, the bill was read and referred to the Senate Health & Human Services Committee where testimony has already been heard and action is pending.

"Tele-medicine and tele-health models can significantly reduce the health care cost placed on our communities by decreasing travel times, staffing and overhead requirements," remarked Guillen. "We should take advantage of the many benefits created by a tele-connectivity program, and increase access to health care in rural Texas."

Many rural areas in Texas lack pediatric specialists. This often requires infants and children to have to travel to urban hospitals for health assistance. If attending physicians were able to use telemedicine technology to consult with specialists in other parts of Texas, many of these young patients could be cared for in their home communities. The goal of the HB 1697 is to improve access to pediatric subspecialists, connect rural hospitals to the state's advanced pediatric specialists and to reduce the number of infants required to travel to large urban centers for specialty care.

HB 1697 will require the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, with the assistance of pediatric tele-medicine specialty providers, to establish a pediatric tele-connectivity resource program for rural Texas. The program will award grants to rural health care facilities to connect them with pediatric specialists and pediatric subspecialists providing tele-medical services. A facility could use grant money to purchase telemedicine equipment or modernize its technical infrastructure to support adequate two-way video, and pay a service fee to a pediatric tele-specialty provider under an annual contract.

"We have an opportunity to allow rural Texans to live free from fear of a lack of specialist pediatric care," said Guillen. "This legislation is vital for maintaining the health of young rural Texans."

Representative Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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