

Investing in Texas: Financing Health Coverage Expansion Conference Proceedings

Welcome

Kenneth Apfel: I want to welcome all of you to this conference, “Investing in Texas: Financing Health Coverage Expansion.” My name is Kenneth Apfel and I am a professor here at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. I serve as one of the three directors of this project. The other project directors, Professors David Warner and Jacqueline Angel, are in the audience, and you will be hearing from both of them later today.

As many of you know, this is the second year of this policy research project, which has been funded by the Foundation for Insurance Regulatory Studies in Texas. Last year, we also held a conference on this topic—and I recognize some of the members in the audience from last year’s conference. Last year, we examined a very broad range of options in this area. This year’s conference is an attempt to sharpen the focus: we will be looking at a few key expansion and financing options in depth, with a goal of increasing the level of understanding of the realistic options available today to the state of Texas to reduce the number of individuals without health insurance.

By way of background, LBJ School policy research projects such as this one combine both faculty expertise and graduate student expertise to address key issues of concern in the public arena. The graduate students in this project bring together a great deal of passion and expertise on this issue. Their Washington experience includes service to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Congressional Budget Office, the Senate Finance Committee, and various congressional offices and private organizations. Their Texas experience includes service to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission—and I see the Commissioner here in the audience with us today—the Texas Department of Insurance and the Texas Legislature.

We have students in this project from all over the United States, including South Carolina, Oregon, New Jersey, Louisiana, Vermont, Illinois, and Iowa. And we have students from all over Texas, including San Antonio, Houston, Waco, El Paso, Austin, Edinburg, and even Sweetwater, Texas.

We all know how important the issue of health insurance is to Texas and to the nation. And we all know that the problem of obtaining affordable health insurance is worsening and that we need to find solutions. It is our collective hope that today’s conference will shed some light on some very specific options available to Texas today to reduce the number of uninsured.

We start our conference today with an overview from the national perspective. And to introduce our first distinguished speaker, I’d like to introduce Jed Perry, a member of our policy research project. Jed has worked for the past year at the Texas Department of

Insurance. He is part of the LBJ School's contribution to Diane Longley, to help her in all of her wonderful efforts at TDI to reduce the number of uninsured in Texas. Before TDI, Jed worked on Capitol Hill and the Center for State Policy Research in Washington, D.C.