

## Legislation Requires Health Benefit Plan Coverage for Routine Health Services Costs for Enrollees Participating in Clinical Trials, Including Cancer Therapeutics

The Texas Legislature passed and Governor Perry signed on June 19, 2009, Senate Bill (SB) 39, which requires health care plans to cover the routine costs of care for Texans enrolled in a clinical trial. Routine costs include any medically necessary health service, such as doctor visits, hospital stays, tests, and x-rays, for which benefits are provided to any health care plan member. The new law is effective September 1, 2009.

The success of clinical trials is crucial to the introduction of new, life-saving therapies for patients facing life-threatening illnesses, like cancer. Unfortunately, the lack of health care coverage for routine health care costs often can be a significant financial barrier to many Texans who might otherwise enroll in trials as patients but must bear these routine costs on their own. The success of clinical trials depends on patients willing to participate. Prior to passage of this legislation, Texans with life-threatening illnesses often were faced with the difficult choice between enrolling in a clinical trial that offers the hope of a life-saving treatment or having health insurance coverage for routine health care costs. SB 39 is an important policy to ensure that seriously ill patients do not have to make this choice by allowing them to participate in clinical trials without the threat of losing their health care coverage.