

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute Applauds Signing of SB 11 and HB 18**

AUSTIN – The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) today applauded Gov. Greg Abbott’s signing of SB 11 and HB 18, historic legislation which will improve access to effective mental health care from the family doctor, provide real-time help to families and schools for high-risk children and youth with mental health needs, expand the mental health workforce, and provide mental health and suicide prevention education to Texas students.

“Today’s actions by Gov. Abbott signals that Texas is leading the nation in providing the mental health care that our families and children need,” said Andy Keller, PhD, President and CEO, MMHPI. “No other state is working harder to improve lives through early identification and intervention.

“Gov. Abbott, who made mental health an emergency item as the session began and put his signature on these bills today, is to be commended, alongside Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who made mental health a priority in the Senate. None of this, though, would have been possible without the visionary leadership of Sen. Jane Nelson, who spearheaded a truly bipartisan effort. In addition, Sen. Kirk Watson, Sen. Larry Taylor, Rep. Greg Bonnen, and Rep. Four Price are to be commended for championing initiatives to provide mental health education, as should Rep. John Zerwas and Speaker Dennis Bonnen, who shepherded these vital initiatives across the finish line.”

“After the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey and its widespread impact on mental health throughout the Gulf Coast, the Governor and the Legislature’s leadership is a tremendous step forward in helping Texas children,” said Maureen Hackett, MMHPI Board member and founder of The Hackett Center for Mental Health. “We are setting a new standard in mental health care.”

The signing of SB 11 and HB 18 represents a revolutionary step forward for mental health care in Texas that will improve and save lives. These new initiatives will vastly expand mental health education and access to care for all Texas children and their families. Half of all mental illnesses begin by age 14, usually at a level

where they can be reliably treated and managed by the family physician, usually without medication. When neglected or overlooked, however, these conditions can worsen, too often to crisis levels. Recognizing the signs of mental illnesses as well as the tools to provide children access to quality care more quickly, instead of waiting the current average of eight to ten years before getting help, will make a significant difference in the lives of Texas children, both today and for future generations.

### **About MMHPI**

Since its public launch in 2014, MMHPI has helped Texas legislators, government officials, members of the judiciary, and local leaders identify systemic mental health needs and solutions, quickly becoming Texas's most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. The Institute is helping Texas leaders address the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, improve access to care for veterans and their families, shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, and expand the mental health workforce.

### **About The Hackett Center for Mental Health**

Dedicated to the unique needs of Greater Houston and the Texas Gulf Coast, The Hackett Center for Mental Health is the first regional center of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI). Leveraging the expertise of exceptionally-skilled researchers, community leaders, and health care providers, The Hackett Center's purpose is to transform systems and influence policy through unprecedented collaboration. Its mission is to create a more promising future where people can obtain effective mental health care when and where they need it.

Learn more about MMHPI and The Hackett Center at [www.texasstateofmind.org](http://www.texasstateofmind.org).