



oz systems

Screening Solutions.
Improving New Lives.



**Terese
Finitzo**

Texas Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (TEHDI) – Let’s Celebrate a Milestone

The close of the 2019 Texas Legislative Session was the 20th anniversary of the original Texas newborn hearing screening legislation signed into law by Governor George Bush before his presidential run.

It started with a request in 1996. Newborn hearing screening was a mandate in Hawaii and Rhode Island, but could it be done in Texas? Parkland Hospital had a larger annual birth census than those states, we said, “Let’s try.”

We faced early discharges in those days and skepticism from pediatricians always alert to the best interests of their young patients. The project was co-funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Dallas Meadows Foundation. Joy O’Neal, who was the audiologist for Texas at that time, and we had lunch with Laura Bush, state leaders, and leaders from the Meadows Foundation. The project was a collaboration among University of Texas at Dallas, Texas DSHS, OZ Systems and 30 leading healthcare institutions that helped us prove feasibility and efficacy.

In 1999, when a Texas State Senator asked what was needed to craft strong legislation, we pointed to the American Speech Language Hearing Association’s (ASHA) Model Early Hearing Detection Bill and the data we had collected from hospitals across Texas that voluntarily initiated hearing screening, like Baylor Scott and White and Texas Health Resources. Systems like Texas Methodist Medical Center, Baylor Medical Center, and Methodist Hospitals of Dallas all contributed time, energy and, importantly for the Legislature, data. The ASHA model bill was our basis, but of course the bill was modified for Texas and with compromise and collaboration of the Texas Hospital Association, and the Texas Pediatric Society, and other critical stakeholders.

The bill passed the Legislature and became law when signed by Governor George Bush in the summer of 1999. Since 2000, seven million Texas newborns have been screened for hearing loss. One Baby at a Time has always been the mantra that has kept us continuously motivated to improve this important program.



Evelyn Cherow, Founder/CEO, GlobalPartnersUnited and Leader in Audiology:
“Congratulations 20 years and much accomplished, proud of you and Ken and OZ for leadership and a steadfast commitment!”



Karen Clark, Leader in Early Intervention and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Education: *“I remember those early days well. Thanks for all your hard work, Terese. You’ve always been one of the true champions of this work.”*



Ted Glatke, Professor Emeritus at University of Arizona and Leader in Audiology:
“You and other leaders have made the recommendations of a conference held at the San Francisco Airport Hilton Hotel 48 year ago come to life.”



Joy O’Neal, Former Program Director of TEHDI: *“Terese, you have always been a great force of nature, and with Ken’s ‘few lines of code on a Saturday night,’ you led Texas in the quest to become the 11th state to screen the hearing of all newborns! Congratulations on a 20-year-old miracle!”*



Sara Haynes, Leader in Speech Pathology:
“Terese, you have made us all so proud!”

888.727.3366 | www.ozsystems.com

