2017 Legislative Strategy

*Houston-based Legacy Community Health is one of the largest community health centers in the nation providing primary care, OB/GYN, pediatrics, behavorial health and much more at 22 clinics across Southeast Texas. Legacy believes in providing the highest quality of care inside the exam room but also in improving lives – and entire communities - outside of the exam room in the halls of government and the media. Below is the organization’s issue portfolio, in broad strokes, that includes advocacy at the federal and state level for 2017.*

Affordable Care Act

Legacy’s goal is ensure the health of safety-net providers remains strong as Congress repeals and repairs the Affordable Care Act. However any new law is crafted, it must be patient-centered – meaning, for example, it includes pre-existing conditions and children can stay on the parents’ plans until 26. It also must be rolled out steadily over time to prevent severe financial shocks.

Childhood Literacy

In partnership with HEB and the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, Legacy’s “Little Readers” initiative, which has put 25,000 free books into the hands of our pediatric patients, acts on the critical research links between pediatricians and early childhood literacy. Legacy is backing legislation that sets up a competitive grant program that makes funds available to health care practitioners who want to provide books to their pediatric patients.

HIV

Legacy will be advocating for policies that help prevent and treat HIV in Texas, including syringe exchange legislation that has been proven to prevent injection-related HIV transmissions, while not increasing drug use. We will be looking to fully fund the Texas HIV Medication Program providing lifesaving drugs to those living with HIV/AIDS and, at the federal level, we will continue supporting AIDS United’s work to support the Ryan White Program.

LGBT

Texas lawmakers have filed what is known as the “bathroom bill” (SB 6), which bans transgender Texans from using the restroom in public schools, universities, and government buildings that matches their gender identity.  This bill is discriminatory to our transgender patients and will exacerbates an already precarious mental health situation in this community. The suicide rate among transgender youth is already an astoundingly acute problem.

In addition, having more transgender voices involved in decisions that directly affect their health care is critical. Legacy supports legislation that would create a statewide Transgender Health Care Advisory Committee, which would explore adverse health impacts for transgender patients.

Autism

Legacy’s bilingual Autism Support Program is the first of its kind in Houston, and confirms the growing need for these services. Legislation has been filed that would commission a statewide study on the early detection and intervention of autism in children, as well as the educational and developmental benefits of prompt provision of therapy. With stronger data and legislative solutions, our clients will be better served.