



CONTACT: [Jessica Michan](mailto:jmichan@legacycommunityhealth.org), Public Relations Director  
[jmichan@legacycommunityhealth.org](mailto:jmichan@legacycommunityhealth.org) or 713-364-3221

[Barrett White](mailto:cwhite@legacycommunityhealth.org), External Communications Specialist  
[cwhite@legacycommunityhealth.org](mailto:cwhite@legacycommunityhealth.org) or 713-416-7309

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Legacy Community Health Available for Comment on Revised Social Work Code of Conduct**

*The newly revised code removes the LGBTQ+ and disabled communities from its list of non-discrimination protections.*

HOUSTON (October 22, 2020) – Legacy Community Health, the largest community health center system in Texas, announced today its opposition to the State Board of Social Work Examiners' revised code of conduct. For years, the State Board of Social Work Examiners has upheld an anti-discrimination policy inclusive of LGBTQ and disabled clients. The newly revised code, which removes these communities from its list of non-discrimination protections, has created unnecessary fear and confusion regarding whether or not the State Board of Examiners will prohibit individual social workers from turning away these clients.

“All Texans should be able to access social services and health care regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability status,” said Legacy’s Director of Social Services, Caroline Hendrix, LCSW-S. “Under this revised policy, individuals could be turned away at a critical point in their care, simply for being who they are. LGBTQ and disabled communities are already at high risk for discrimination outside of social work settings, and this decision adds to the difficulties they face. This burden will inevitably lead to an increase in patients falling out of care at a time when access to services are paramount in the fight to ending the pandemic and mitigating its effects on our community.”

Legacy Community Health opposes the updated code for its impact on the community:

- This policy change undermines the years of work and trust Texas social workers have strived to achieve in our communities.
- If allowed to remain unchanged, the revised code will lead to an increase in barriers, making it harder to secure affordable health care, mental health services, housing, food assistance programs and other services needed to uplift Texans in need.
- Taxpayers will ultimately feel the financial impact of this decision as patients face denial of care, or put off seeking services out of fear of rejection, overloading an already overburdened health care and mental health system. As a consequence, emergency rooms could see an increase in uninsured patients with exacerbated preventable diseases and irreversibly worsened health outcomes.

“This decision calls into question the integrity of the entire social work profession,” said Hendrix. “The abrupt unanimous approval from the Board leaves others wondering, ‘where will this end? Will this happen with other professional associations?’”

###

### **About Legacy Community Health**

Legacy Community Health (Legacy) is a full-service network of community health clinics offering primary and specialty care in the Texas Gulf Coast region. Services include adult primary care, behavioral health services, community outreach, dental care, endocrinology, gender health, geriatrics, comprehensive HIV/AIDS care, nutrition and wellness, OB/GYN and maternity care, pediatrics, pharmacy, public health, school-based health, social services, and vision care. With more than 40 locations across Houston, Baytown, Deer Park, and Beaumont, Legacy is the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Texas. Legacy has been a United Way-affiliated agency since 1990. To learn more, visit [www.legacycommunityhealth.org](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org).