



## **Public Policy Agenda**

*Approved by Vitalyst Board of Directors on 1/27/2022*

### **Purpose**

The statements below frame Vitalyst's positions on public policy issues impacting health in Arizona. They serve to inform and guide the Foundation's actions in matters regarding health policy and advocacy.

### **An Equitable Approach to Public Policy**

The impacts of public policy are rarely distributed equally across all populations. In fact, many of today's health disparities can be traced back to the design of specific public policies. Therefore, Vitalyst's policy agenda is focused first on supporting Arizonans experiencing the greatest disparities in health. This often includes, but is not limited to, advocating for policies that support the health and well-being of Arizonans with limited financial means, communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and rural communities.

## **POSITION STATEMENTS**

### **Care Coordination**

The healthcare system's continuum of care is often fractured, inefficient and cost prohibitive. To move closer to the Triple Aim (i.e., better care, better health outcomes and lower costs), public policies should develop care models that reward value, improve health outcomes and coordinate services across complimentary systems. Public policies should always be designed to benefit the person/patient/community being served, and should leverage both medical and non-medical resources in developing a true continuum of care. *Policy concepts include support for mobile-integrated healthcare, health information exchanges, behavioral health integration and the integration of social determinants of health within healthcare.*

### **Child Development**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports policies that favor supportive and safe environments in homes, schools, and communities that ensure the best possible development of all children in Arizona. Public policy should lead to coordinated, systematic improvements in early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence that are based on the best available evidence supporting the cognitive, physical, and emotional development of children. Early childhood policy should advance quality, accessible and affordable early childhood services, including child care and education, to strengthen Arizona's young children, families, and communities. Additionally, public policy should support the application and funding of child development strategies and services in ways that prepare adults to recognize and respond to signs of toxic stress in themselves, caregivers and children. *Policy concepts include support for trauma-informed and resilient schools, childcare assistance and subsidies, family and community supports, school readiness and early literacy.*

### **Children's Vision Health**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports a system that ensures the best possible vision health for all children in Arizona. Public policy should lead to coordinated, systematic improvements in vision screening, examination, and treatment for all children in Arizona. We support policies that strive to create a system

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that ensures all children receive affordable, quality, age-appropriate vision screenings and care in accessible locations both within and outside of a primary care venue. *Policy concepts include universal screening in schools.*

### **Evidence-Based Public Health Policy**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports policies that assure continuous monitoring, protection and development of evidence-based public health practices which have been proven to advance public health and well-being. Well-established public health interventions (such as those identified in the CDC's greatest public health achievements since 1900), as well as non-clinical, community-wide interventions (such as those highlighted in the CDC's HI-5 initiative), should be championed through public policy. Vitalyst supports the advancement of the public health sector, and we recognize that the fundamental interventions which improved the public's health over the last century must not be overlooked. *Policy concepts include preventing tobacco use, support for maternal and child health, family planning, vaccination, Housing First programs, and expanded access to public transportation and healthy foods.*

### **Health Insurance Coverage**

In many ways, health insurance coverage is the door to healthcare in United States. With coverage, Arizonans are more likely to have a usual source of care, afford healthcare services, and show improvement in overall health. Vitalyst Health Foundation supports policies that provide quality health insurance options to all Arizonans, as well as policies that increase the number of Arizonans with quality coverage. Policies should protect consumers from discrimination and burdensome out-of-pocket costs, and ensure that strong networks of healthcare providers are available to meet consumers' needs. *Policy concepts include supporting network adequacy, safeguarding consumer protections, and ensuring that all Arizonans have coverage.*

### **Healthcare Workforce**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports public policies that attract and develop a healthcare workforce that is prepared to meet the current and future health needs of Arizonans. Policy solutions addressing Arizona's shortages of physical and behavioral healthcare providers should take into account the state's unique geographic and sociodemographic characteristics, and should create systems that build and distribute resources based on community need. This, in part, involves expanding the educational pipeline and adequately providing professional development opportunities for the healthcare workforce. Primary care, behavioral health and preventive services should be prioritized, and worker compensation should afford a quality standard of living. *Policy concepts include support for graduate medical education, loan repayment programs, telehealth, and eliminating health professional shortage areas.*

### **Healthy Food Environments**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports a healthy food environment for all Arizonans. Public policy should lead to systematic improvements in the food environment, acknowledge the complexity of the food environment and strive to create one that is healthy, equitable, sustainable, and thriving. *Policy concepts include support for local agriculture that takes into account Arizona's natural resources and distribution systems, client-focused subsidies and supports that expand access to healthy food, and Indigenous food sovereignty.*

### **Non-Profits and Electoral Politics**

Vitalyst supports policies which create and protect clear boundaries between non-profit organizations and electoral politics. We are opposed to measures which expand the non-profit sector's capacity to engage in electoral politics; and we urge lawmakers to safeguard policies which preserve the public's trust in the non-profit sector. *Policy concepts include support for the Johnson Amendment.*

### **Transportation**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports a future where transportation policy and investments result in options that improve safety, enable active transportation, and protect environmental quality. Transportation policy should center the needs and desires of individuals of all abilities, incomes and sociodemographics, ensuring they have the opportunity to travel to and from places in a manner that is safe, reliable and affordable. The design of transportation systems should also consider local community input and character, including aesthetics, geography and land use policy. *Policy concepts include support for multimodal transportation, elimination of traffic fatalities and severe injuries, and the development of Complete Streets.*

### **Quality, Affordable Housing**

Vitalyst Health Foundation supports public policies that protect and improve housing choices, including the physical condition of housing, affordability and the surrounding neighborhood. We believe public policies should advance systems that lead to equitable housing opportunities, and such opportunities should be leveraged to improve health outcomes. *Policy concepts include support for housing development and redevelopment that takes a holistic neighborhood planning approach, partners with existing residents and adheres to Fair Housing laws.*