



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES – 2023

The list below represents a collection of legislative issues that are aligned with Vitalyst’s Public Policy Agenda. Whereas public policy plays a significant role in shaping Arizonans’ ability to achieve health, Vitalyst may engage in the following matters during this legislative session.

### **CARE COORDINATION:**

**Strengthening 2-1-1** – *Building a robust referral system for Arizonans to access community-based services.* 2-1-1 Arizona will be working with state officials to obtain additional funding for its core operations, thereby creating a stronger statewide system that connects Arizonans to resources.

### **CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Child Care Assistance** – *Investing in child care to ensure that quality, affordable options are available to Arizona’s families.* Legislation will be introduced to secure additional state funding for child care providers and to make child care more affordable for Arizona families.

**Mental Health in Schools** – *Investing in the mental health and well-being of Arizona’s youth.* The Governor’s Office has stated its commitment to enhancing student access to social workers and behavioral health counselors in schools.

### **CIVIC HEALTH**

**Civic Engagement and Participation** – *Enhancing the ability of individuals and communities to constructively engage with each other and the political systems by which they are represented.* Vitalyst will engage in policy opportunities to protect and/or advance civic health in Arizona.

### **EVIDENCE-BASED PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Tobacco Cessation** – *Preventing tobacco use among Arizonans.* Partners will be working to establish a statewide tobacco retail license to ensure that tobacco vendors are following standards when selling tobacco products. Efforts are likely to include opposition to tobacco industry-backed bills which attempt to preempt local regulation of tobacco licenses.

**Vaccinations** – *Protecting Arizonans from communicable disease outbreaks.* Bills may be introduced to further reduce governmental authority to protect the public’s health. Past efforts include Vitalyst’s opposition to additional flexibilities for vaccine exemptions, bans on vaccine requirements, and the stripping of authorities from the Arizona Department of Health Services to respond during public health emergencies.

### **HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE:**

**AHCCCS Sunset Review** – *Ensuring that low-income and vulnerable Arizonans have access to affordable health care.* AHCCCS is required to undergo a Sunset Review every five years, during which time the Auditor General and legislature review an agency audit, host a public hearing and ultimately determine whether the agency should continue. Vitalyst is committed to expressing its support for the continuation of AHCCCS.

A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

**Oral Health Coverage** – *Ensuring that all Arizonans have access to quality, affordable oral health services.* AHCCCS currently provides limited coverage for emergency dental services. Advocates will be seeking legislation requiring AHCCCS to cover comprehensive oral health coverage for its members.

**Children’s Health Insurance Coverage** – *Ensuring that all Arizonans have access to quality, affordable health care services.* Advocates are discussing ways to expand income eligibility for KidsCare and to remove initial waiting periods.

#### **HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE:**

**Housing as a Health Care Workforce Solution** – *Collectively identifying solutions to Arizona’s health care workforce shortages.* Health care institutions are experiencing workforce recruitment and retention challenges due to housing costs and shortages, particularly in rural areas.

#### **HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS:**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Drug Felon Ban** – *Expanding access to healthy, affordable foods for all Arizonans.* Current Arizona statute prohibits access to SNAP benefits for individuals with prior drug felonies on their record. Partners will be introducing legislation to remove this ban.

**Double-Up Food Bucks** – *Expanding access to healthy, affordable foods for all Arizonans.* Advocates will be seeking state funding to further support a program that doubles the purchasing power SNAP benefits when families buy fruits and vegetables at local food markets.

**Agriculture Apprenticeship Program** – *Supporting the workforce that grows Arizona’s food.* Partners will be seeking additional state funding to extend a pilot program that supports farmers who are willing to mentor future farmers.

#### **HOUSING:**

**Arizona Housing Trust Fund** – *Development and maintenance of quality, affordable housing for Arizonans who need it most.* The Governor’s Office has expressed its intent to increase the Arizona Housing Trust Fund by \$150M, which can be used for housing supports, development and a variety of other housing solutions.

**Attainable Housing** – *Increasing the availability of quality, affordable housing that enables low-to-moderate income households to live in the same communities in which they work.* Current Arizona statute allows rural school districts to allocate funds and property toward the development, procurement and maintenance of housing options for their staff. Partners will be introducing legislation to expand these “teacherages” to urban and suburban areas, and to remove 20-year lease limits which currently hinder progress.

#### **TRANSPORTATION:**

**Maricopa County Ballot Initiative** – *Increasing the availability of quality, affordable transportation options.* Maricopa County will seek legislative authority to run a ballot initiative to fund the County’s transportation plan over the next 20 years.

## **OTHER LEGISLATION CONNECTED TO VITALYST'S CORE VALUES & MISSION**

**Nondiscrimination in Arizona** - Vitalyst holds equity as both a core organizational value and a critical pillar in our ingredients for change. To solve Arizona's greatest health problems, we need to pursue policies that focus first on supporting Arizonans experiencing the greatest health disparities. That also means we need to stand in opposition to policies that further jeopardize the health of historically marginalized populations.