

The Immunization Partnership (TIP) 2021 Texas Legislative Agenda

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the gaps and vulnerabilities in our public health system and crippled Texas businesses. The 87th Texas Legislature must take the lead in restoring Texas from the ravages of the pandemic by protecting Texans and the Texas economy from another public health catastrophe. The Immunization Partnership Legislative Agenda will help Texas recover from the global pandemic and close the gaps for vaccine-preventable diseases. To respond and recover from the 2020 coronavirus global pandemic, Texas must:

Build a more functional state immunization registry.

Legislative Goal #1: Improve the functionality, interoperability, and efficiency of the Texas Immunization Registry (ImmTrac) for equitable and efficient vaccine distributions for COVID-19 and other diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for Texas to build a more functional state immunization registry. Texans expect and deserve easy access to their immunization records. We must standardize and modernize the existing registry to capture accurate immunization data and ensure equitable and wide distribution of life-saving vaccines.

Reduce vaccine preventable disease spread in congregant living facilities including correctional facilities.

Legislative Goal #2: Increase the health and safety within Texas congregant-living facilities through a requirement that these facilities offer vaccines and increased access to health records.

We have an obligation to reduce vaccine-preventable disease spread in congregant-living facilities, including state correctional facilities. COVID-19 strikes hard at older Americans, which is why Texas has prioritized nursing homes for vaccine distribution. State hospitals, prisons, and other congregant-living facilities are also vulnerable to COVID 19 and other vaccine-preventable viruses. Texas can save lives and reduce health care costs by millions of dollars by preventing the spread of these diseases through vaccines.

Increase access and equity.

Legislative Goal #3: Require analysis of data concerning vaccine distribution and vaccination rates for all ages and ethnicities to inform public health officials where to strengthen outreach and educational efforts and to urge appropriate action.

Increasing health care access and equity is imperative for all Texans, particularly our underserved and vulnerable populations. We must examine our methods of vaccine distribution and uptake for COVID-19 vaccines and routine childhood and adult immunizations among these communities. COVID-19 disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minority populations. The death rate among Black people is more than double the rate among White people, while the mortality rate for the American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) is nearly two times that of White people.

Support Vaccine Research and Development in Texas.

Legislative Goal #4: Create a state endowment to support Texas-based universities, corporations, nonprofits, and collaboratives to conduct vaccine research and development. The endowment, funded through the passage of a dedicated research and development bond, will provide vital seed funding to attract large federal and private research grants.

Supporting vaccine research and development in Texas is an investment in the future health and wellbeing of Texans and the world. Texas already is a global leader in discovery science and biomedical informatics. We sit on the cusp of becoming a leading biotech hub for vaccine research and development. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the need for multiple and concurrent vaccine research and development sites to respond rapidly to on-going and future infectious disease threats.

Immunize. Prevent What's Preventable.

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