



Families First Advocacy Committee Goals Legislative Year 2017

Medicaid Expansion: Continue to work with our partners (Georgians for a Healthy Future and Georgia Budget & Policy Institute) to advocate on behalf of Medicaid expansion and lobby legislators to close the coverage gap in Georgia. More particularly, our Advocacy program will create a “Families in the Gap” campaign, which will highlight via our website and podcast the personal stories of how clients we serve will benefit from Medicaid expansion.*

Implementation of a State EITC: Work with the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute (GBPI) to advocate for the implementation of a state EITC. Note: GBPI is taking the advocacy lead on this, and we are providing support.

Family Care Act: Work with the Georgia Job/Family Collaborative to pass the Family Care Act, which provides up to 5 days for an employee to take earned sick leave to care for an immediate family member. This bill passed both the House and Senate committees last year, but died in the Senate Rules committee. We know there is bipartisan support for this, there’s just more advocacy work to do to get it across the finish line.

Anti-Trafficking Council’s Policy Initiatives: For the past several months, Zach has been representing Families First at United Way’s Anti-Trafficking Council meetings. The council’s advocacy agenda is still being solidified but most likely the item we will advocate most strongly for is increased penalties for pimping and pandering.

Increased Funding for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Advocate for increased funding in the state budget that will be allocated specifically to provide social services to youth aging out of foster care. This funding will particularly benefit the Families First COACHES program.

SNAP and TANF Sanctions: Last year we spent a significant amount of time advocating against a bill that would have increased sanctions against individuals who violated the terms of their SNAP and TANF eligibility. Our particular reason for advocating against this was that the bill would have adversely affected children because of the action of their parents. We expect this bill to come back in a different form, and we want to ensure that children still have access to SNAP and TANF, as children rely on these public assistance programs for healthy growth and nourishment.

Use the new building as a space for community advocacy: We envision our new building as being used as a space for true community advocacy. This vision can be manifested in several different ways. We want our office to be a place where: community residents can discuss, organize, advocate, brainstorm, and engage in dialogue about issues affecting the community; learn about legislative and policy issues; participate in advocacy; host town hall forums for elected officials.

Broaden the Scope and Reach of the Advocacy Podcast: We had a great inaugural year of the Families First podcast, publishing 12 episodes, with close to 800 total listens. We would like to continue to publish the podcast every Friday that the legislature is in session, and also incorporate advocacy colleagues from partner organizations via interviews and joint-podcasts. This will expand the scope of the material we cover, as well as broaden our audience.

Day the Capitol: We have had very successful Days at the Capitol for the past two years, and we would like to make 2017’s DATC just as successful, if not more so. Our DATC will follow the model from previous years: informational

seminars in the morning about pertinent legislative issues, as well as an instructional seminar on how to effectively lobby legislators. In the afternoon we will “work the ropes” and advocate on behalf of specific bills. In the afternoon we will have a table in the Rotunda to hand out literature and answer questions about Families First.

Bookend Events in November and May: In November Zach will lead a breakfast seminar for All Staff and Board members on “what to expect” for the upcoming legislative session, focusing particularly on bills that will affect the work we do. In May he will host a lunch to present on what actually happened during the legislative session.

Voter Registration: Collaborate with our community partners to participate in voter registration drives and drum up support for GOTV (Get out the Vote) initiatives.

Adoption Agency Regulation: Work with GALA to advocate for legislation that would require adoption agencies to be licensed by the state.

Ballot Initiative Event: Host an informational event in October for staff, Board, and community partners about the four ballot initiatives that will be voted on in November. This is will be strictly educational, and not partisan in any way.

*This legislative goal has been significantly affected by the recent presidential election. Given President-elect Trump’s campaign promise to repeal the ACA, and the likelihood of this happening to at least some degree, this goal has largely been eliminated for 2017. We will not advocate specifically for Medicaid expansion this year, but rather continue to advocate for a much more generalized goal of providing health care coverage to those Georgians who remain uninsured.