



2021

Prevention Institute Federal Policy Priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration & the 117th Congress

“We do not have to accept the status quo. We can do better on behalf of each other. We can achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people...And the tomorrow that we build will be healthier, more equitable, and more just.”*

Mona Hanna-Attisha, MD, MPH, Founder and Director, Michigan State University and Hurley Children’s Hospital Pediatric Public Health Initiative

Prevention Institute advocates for policies and structural changes that bolster health, safety, and wellbeing through thriving, equitable communities. We prioritize racial justice and health equity in all of our efforts. It is abundantly clear that “returning to normal” will not achieve a healthy and just society. Many of the “normal” systems and structures our society relies on [were never designed to be inclusive in the first place](#) and are based in—and help perpetuate—the delusions of white supremacy. To achieve the goals of racial justice and health equity—enabling all communities to enjoy optimal health, safety, and wellbeing—societal systems and structures have to be reimagined and redesigned. Prevention Institute’s overarching policy and advocacy goals are focused on:

- ❖ Ending segregation from opportunity; advancing racial justice and health equity; and supporting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and people of color communities in accessing resources and opportunities to thrive and achieve optimal health, safety, and wellbeing;
- ❖ Broadening the boundaries of public health practice and strengthening the country’s public health and prevention infrastructure by prioritizing efforts grounded in racial justice and health equity that emphasize community-driven solutions and leadership; and
- ❖ Strengthening the conditions and protective factors in communities that equitably advance health, safety, and wellbeing.

To make progress towards these goals, Prevention Institute will work in partnership to champion an evolving portfolio of federal policies, practices, and investments that are selected due to their role in shaping equitable health, safety, and wellbeing outcomes. These include:

- **Advancing policies and actions that promote healing and address the harms that result from structural racism and systemic violence** based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender,

* Remarks made during the 2020 American Public Health Association meeting, accessed on [10 Inspiring Quotes from APHA 2020 - de Beaumont Foundation](#)

socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, immigration status, religious and non-religious affiliation, or country of origin, including by:

- **Implementing comprehensive policies and investments that support core protective factors in communities including:** a living wage and labor protections, safe and affordable housing, fully resourced schools and affordable higher education, quality public transportation, healthy food systems, availability of parks and open space, and clean air and water, among others.
 - **Funding and building on the provisions in the *Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA)*** as a strategic legislative and administrative roadmap to eliminate racial and ethnic health inequities.
 - **Restoring and strengthening the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule** at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
 - **Restoring and expanding access and eligibility to safety net programs that address health, safety, and wellbeing**, including WIC, SNAP, school meals, early education, housing and utility assistance, transportation access, comprehensive reproductive and gender affirming health services, and healthcare access.
 - **Rescinding the regulatory revisions to section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act** that instituted an ideologically based re-definition of sex discrimination and strengthening the implementation of anti-discrimination provisions.
 - **Holding the Domestic Policy Council and COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force** accountable for delivering actionable strategies and setting clear goals and targets that advance racial justice and health equity through federal actions.
 - **Passage of democracy reforms—including *H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2021***—that expand and protect voting rights and address the systemic voter disenfranchisement experienced by voters of color.
- **Advancing a portfolio of investments to strengthen the public health and prevention infrastructure and its focus on racial justice and health equity**, including by:
 - **Increasing federal investments in community-level prevention initiatives** that enhance health, safety, wellbeing, racial justice, and health equity. Specific priorities include growing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH)* program to fund at least one grantee in each state and support capacity building of new community-based grantees; supporting the creation of new programs and investments at CDC that support communities in addressing the social and community determinants of health through the *Improving Social Determinants of Health Act*; and restoring the *Prevention and Public Health Fund* to the intended \$2 billion per year while directing those increases to fund community-based efforts at the intersection of public health, racial justice, and health equity.
 - **Expanding the public health and prevention workforce to reflect the priorities and leadership of communities that have been most harmed by structural racism and violence.**

The proposal to fund a public health job corps program announced on January 14, 2021 by President Biden is a starting point for mobilizing a more comprehensive and diverse community workforce.

- **Creating a “National Center for Anti-Racism” at the CDC through the *Anti-Racism in Public Health Act of 2021*** to further and strengthen the knowledge base and concrete practice of anti-racism through public health approaches and programs.
- **Advancing a portfolio of policies and actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that prioritize public health and address the underlying factors and systems that have placed communities of color and others at disproportionate harm.** An equitable COVID-19 recovery process should maintain the effective policy responses already put in place during the pandemic as the foundation for ongoing policy solutions that will advance long-term health and wellbeing, including by:
 - **Providing direct relief to individuals, workers, and families to support resilience, recovery, and rebuilding.** Direct relief should be provided regardless of immigration or incarceration status.
 - **Providing direct funding to states, territories, tribes, and locales** to allow full and equitable access to programs and services that are essential to ensuring equitable community-wide recoveries.
- **Adopting a comprehensive approach to preventing trauma at the individual and community levels** (i.e., [adverse childhood experiences and adverse community experiences](#)), including by:
 - **Addressing the inequitable community conditions that increase the risk of trauma** for children, families, and across entire communities, including structural racism, systemic violence against the LGBTQ+ community, a hostile climate for immigrants, mass incarceration, displacement, economic inequity, and unequal access to health-promoting resources and opportunities.
 - **Emphasizing community-level primary prevention strategies as part of the national response to diseases of despair**—including opioids and other substance misuse, and suicide—to complement an ongoing focus on treatment.
 - **Addressing the growing epidemic of social isolation** with strategies that build connection, safety, and trust.
- **Supporting racial justice and health equity-focused health system transformations that prioritize delivery and payment reforms to address the social and community determinants of health, safety, and wellbeing.**
- **Investing in *upfront* strategies and public health and community infrastructure that complements intervention strategies and addresses the root causes of violence,** including by:

- **Reimagining community safety using safety in Black communities as the barometer for change.** Holding current systems accountable for producing racist, violent, and oppressive outcomes and invest in policies and practices—including culturally rooted mental health supports, community-based crisis supports, and restorative justice practices—that truly ensure community safety and wellbeing for those who are disproportionately impacted by violence.
 - **Increasing resources and capacity building for public health departments and communities to implement and participate in comprehensive community efforts to address and prevent multiple forms of violence** (e.g., school, community/gun, intimate partner, sexual assault, and child abuse and exploitation).
 - **Advancing a [comprehensive public health platform](#) to prevent all forms of gun violence**—including mass shootings, intimate partner violence, suicide, community violence, and violence involving law enforcement.
 - **Reforming the criminal justice system away from racialized punishment and disproportionate rates of incarceration** towards an emphasis on public health approaches that address the underlying contributors to violence.
- **Protecting the health, safety, wellbeing, and dignity of immigrant families through humane and comprehensive immigration policies that advance paths to citizenship**, including by restoring and expanding access to essential public health programs and social supports including COVID-19 relief, undoing the current public charge regulation, and funding community-led outreach and education on access to public benefits.
 - **Maintain a bold, all-of-government approach to prevent, address, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.** The executive actions signed in January 2021, including the establishment of the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, provide a strong foundation for centering environmental justice and addressing the impacts of climate change, especially on Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color. Further actions include resources and policies to invest in infrastructure to prevent the severity of future climate-related events, contribute to community resilience, and support healing from climate-related trauma.

“Any return to normal is a return to the normality of racism.”[†]

Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, antiracism scholar, historian, and best-selling author

[†] June 26, 2020 via Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DrIbram/status/1276564954833915915>