



2025-2026 Federal Policy Priorities

Prevention Institute (PI) works in partnership with health equity, civil rights, social and racial justice, and public health advocates to champion and support an interconnected portfolio of federal policies, practices, and investments that strengthen community-centered health, safety, and wellbeing. Our overarching advocacy goals are grounded in:

- **Advancing A System of Prevention for Health Equity and Racial Justice.** We define A System of Prevention for Health Equity and Racial Justice as the outcomes resulting from collective efforts to champion community-driven policies that advance upstream prevention, health equity, and racial justice.
- **Strengthening community protective factors to equitably advance health, safety, and wellbeing.** We emphasize changing community conditions as a direct way to impact health, safety, and wellbeing and to push back against the inequitable distribution of resources, power, and opportunity.
- **Expanding the boundaries—and influence—of public health practice.** We seek to increase the relevance and uptake of upstream public health approaches by cultivating greater common ground and alignment between the broad public health sector and the priorities of community-centered health equity and racial justice networks.

Over the past several years, PI has deepened our community-centered practice by partnering with communities in support of community-driven change and expanded our policy partnerships to emphasize the interconnected priorities across public health, health equity, and racial justice. These experiences and learnings inspire the decision to ground PI's federal priorities in an affirmative policy agenda. An affirmative policy agenda describes a positive vision and hope for the future; focuses on long-term transformational change even while working through the current policy context; views policy passage as a starting point, not the end, by also emphasizing equitable policy implementation and evaluation; and seeks to grow, shift, and share power and resources with communities through the policy process.

This affirmative policy agenda reflects PI's commitment to remain steadfastly focused on advancing bold policies that build a transformational future, even as we respond to current policy opportunities and limitations.

2025-2026

In addition to championing the core policy priorities detailed below, PI will continue to support a broad range of connected policy issues and opportunities. This includes ongoing engagement in efforts to reimagine and redesign policies and systems to foster a shared culture of interdependence, dignity, and belonging. All of PI's legislative, administrative, regulatory, and appropriations-related actions—including positions on specific legislation and federal actions—can be publicly accessed through our online [Federal Policy Portal](#).

PI's core 2025-2026* policy priorities include championing:

- **Strengthening the Public Health Ecosystem and Aligning Investments with Health Equity & Racial Justice** through investments in a community-based workforce and public health funding and programs designed for equity
- **Community Protective Factors** through programs and policies that strengthen the sociocultural and physical environments, and offer access to equitable economic and educational opportunities
- **Community Safety** through comprehensive public health investments that create the conditions that people and communities need to be safe
- **Community Mental Health, Wellbeing & Resilience** through policies, practices and norms that strengthen opportunities for thriving, social connection, and healing
- **Climate Justice & Resilience** through a bold, all-of-government approach to prevent, address, and mitigate the deleterious health, safety, and wellbeing impacts of climate change
- **Immigration Justice** as essential to public health by strengthening and safeguarding the health, safety, wellbeing, and dignity of immigrant families and individuals

FEDERAL POLICY COMMITMENTS

Prevention Institute believes that *how* we show up as policy advocates and partners matters. To complement our policy priorities, we ground our advocacy approach in the following commitments:



Amplifying community-centered solutions and leadership



Championing health equity and racial justice



Upholding the values of connection, dignity, and interdependence



Weaving multiple forms of evidence



Elevating community-centered narratives



Expanding and redefining our policy partnerships



“Showing our work” for greater accountability & transparency

Our companion [Federal Advocacy Commitments](#) brief provides additional details.

* We will periodically revisit these priorities and may update them as necessary.

STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC HEALTH ECOSYSTEM AND INVESTING IN HEALTH EQUITY & RACIAL JUSTICE

PI recognizes that a strong public health ecosystem is rooted in health equity and racial justice and centers community priorities, assets, and leadership. A public health ecosystem emphasizes greater investments in an expanded and diverse workforce that includes non-governmental and community-based leaders and entities in addition to governmental public health. It also means intentionally designing public health programs and funding mechanisms to operationalize health equity and racial justice outcomes. Our priorities include:

- Increasing federal investments in community-level prevention initiatives that enhance health, safety, wellbeing through health equity and racial justice—including creating and strengthening direct, accessible funding opportunities for community-based organizations advancing community-determined priorities in communities of color and low wealth
- Expanding the definition and role of the public health workforce through strong investments in a community-based public health and prevention workforce (e.g., promotoras and other community health workers)
- Increased investments in governmental public health at all levels, including protecting and expanding legal authorities to affirm public health powers
- Building specific equity strategies and objectives—including procedural, distributional, and structural— and clear accountability measures into the design, implementation, and evaluation of public health funding mechanisms
- Integrating and incentivizing the inclusion of multiple forms of evidence—including contextual and experiential evidence—in developing and responding to federal funding opportunities, grant reporting, and evaluation
- Strengthening federal agency equity plans through greater public oversight, enhanced data sources, and accountability metrics

KEY CONCEPTS

Contextual evidence refers to measurable factors gathered from local and community data sources to understand how community context and characteristics will impact the implementation, usefulness, and acceptability of a strategy or decision.

Experiential evidence is the collection of knowledge and experiences of people who have practiced or lived in the community of interest or have experienced the issue of interest firsthand and are able to connect to the realities, strengths, and challenges of the community. This evidence includes the experiences of those most impacted by inequities.

Source: [Uplifting Contextual and Experiential Evidence: Promising Practices & Recommendations](#). Prevention Institute, October 2024.

Procedural equity refers to transparent, fair, and inclusive processes that provide additional opportunities for those who are disproportionately impacted by inequities.

Distributional equity means fair distribution of resources, benefits, and burdens, and prioritizes resources for communities experiencing the greatest inequities.

Structural equity addresses underlying structural factors and policies that gave rise to inequities and commits to correcting past harms and preventing future unintended consequences.

Source: [Building Bridges: The Strategic Imperative for Advancing Health Equity and Racial Justice](#). Prevention Institute, July 2020.

COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

PI supports comprehensive policies and investments that strengthen core protective factors that impact the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals, families, and entire communities. We recognize that policies must strengthen the sociocultural environment, physical environment, and offer access to equitable economic and educational opportunities for people across race; ethnicity; life stage; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; socioeconomic status; physical and mental ability; immigration status; religious or non-religious affiliation; and countries of origin. We support:

- Passage of democracy reforms that strengthen and protect voting rights
- Safe and affordable housing policies including Direct Rental Assistance and rent caps on rental homes with federally backed financing
- Investments in quality public transportation, healthy food systems, availability of parks and open space, and clean air and water
- Labor and wage protections including living wages, and job-protected paid family, sick, and medical leave
- Permanent expansions of the Child Tax Credit (fully refundable) and Earned Income Tax Credit (including for workers without dependents)
- Investments in early, K-12, and higher education—including access to universal school meals, social-emotional learning programs, adoption of restorative justice practices and elimination of zero tolerance discipline policies, comprehensive school-based health centers, expanded federal student loan eligibility, and student loan forgiveness
- Universal, accessible, and culturally responsive healthcare access for all who live in the U.S., including comprehensive reproductive and gender affirming health services, mental and behavioral health care
- Expanding access and eligibility to essential safety net programs that address health, safety, and wellbeing, including WIC, SNAP, childcare and early education subsidies, housing and utility assistance, transportation access

COMMUNITY SAFETY

PI supports increased and sustained investments that address the root causes of multiple forms of violence and create the conditions that people and communities truly need to be safe. We recognize that racial justice is a determinant of safety and work to emphasize up front strategies as part of a public health approach to complement and support essential in the thick and aftermath intervention strategies. Our priorities include:

- Strengthening accountability and sustainability by reimagining community safety using safety in Black and Brown communities as the barometer for change and centering the voices, leadership, and lived experiences of communities at inequitable risk for violence in decision-making
- Robust investments in [public health pathways](#) to community safety, including: resources and capacity building for community-based organizations, public health departments, and researchers to implement, participate in, and evaluate comprehensive community efforts to equitably address and prevent multiple forms of violence
- Robust and direct investments and capacity building resources for community-based organizations and networks led by, staffed by, and working on behalf of those with lived experience of violence
- Investing in the leadership of young changemakers to lend their voice and expertise to community safety strategy and narrative efforts
- 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
- Efforts to hold current systems accountable for producing racist, violent, and oppressive outcomes
- The widespread adoption of non-carceral approaches and trauma-informed civilian crisis responses

KEY CONCEPTS

Multiple Forms of violence: PI considers the root causes and connections across multiple forms of violence, including: school, community/gun violence, intimate partner/domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and exploitation.

Up Front Strategies create the conditions that people need to be safe. *For example*, voting rights, living wages, and equitable community investment, help to ensure that institutions and systems are just and equitable.

In the Thick Strategies influence risk and protective factors for people who may be at increased risk for violence perpetration and/or victimization. *For example*, community and hospital-based violence interruptions and other programs that provide high-touch, personalized opportunities to individuals involved in firearm offense.

In the Aftermath Strategies include culturally-rooted healing practices and mental health supports, community-based crisis supports, and community-driven restorative justice that help individuals, families, and communities heal from the multiple traumatic effects of violence.

Source: [Community Safety Realized: Public Health Pathways to Preventing Violence](#). Prevention Institute, May 2021.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH, WELLBEING & RESILIENCE

PI supports policies, practices, and norms to strengthen and create conditions that support mental health, wellbeing, and resilience at a community level. These protective elements include the presence of social connections and trust; the ability to act for the community good; opportunities to experience and share cultural identity; safe gathering places; and economic opportunity. We also understand that trauma can manifest at a community level and work to advance comprehensive approaches to address and prevent community trauma. Our priorities include:

- Policies and programs that contribute to community-level wellbeing, healing, and resilience, including through greater investments in and access to culturally relevant community-based supports (e.g., through schools, community centers, and other gathering places)
- Expansion of a community-based, culturally, and linguistically appropriate mental health and behavioral health workforce—including peer support—steeped in community context and able to respond to community lived experience
- Dismantling and replacing policies that increase the risk of trauma for children, families, and across entire communities including through structural racism; systemic violence against the LGBTQIA+ community; a hostile climate for immigrants; mass incarceration; displacement; economic inequity; and segregation from health-promoting resources and opportunities
- Emphasizing community-level primary prevention strategies in response to substance misuse—including the opioids epidemic—as a direct complement to harm reduction, treatment, and long-term recovery
- Adopting a comprehensive public health approach to prevent suicide through prevention of suicide risk in the first place and strengthening of protective factors; intervention to identify and support people already at risk and prevent re-attempts; postvention to assist survivors of suicide loss and people with lived experience; and strategies geared to subpopulations at highest risk for suicide

KEY CONCEPTS

Community resilience: the ability/capacity of a community to adapt, recover and thrive, even in the face of adversity.

Community trauma: the impact of chronic adversity across a community.

Importance of addressing community trauma: communities with high levels of community trauma share similar characteristics that make it difficult for them to develop and implement effective strategies to improve wellbeing and thrive.

Source: [What? Why? How? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework](#). Prevention Institute, 2017.

Primary prevention strategies for substance misuse are centered on mitigating risk of exposure by building protective factors within communities and healthy relationships that support thriving opportunity. Examples of what this could look like include building quality affordable housing; ensuring quality education, increasing access to public transportation to connect communities to essential resources and opportunities; creating opportunities for job training and placement; having meaningful employment with living wages that allow families to meet their basic needs; and social, arts, and cultural activities that promote social connection, belonging, and a sense of purpose.

Source: [Supporting Decision Makers Using Opioid Settlement Funds: Guiding Principles for Investment and Primary Prevention](#). Prevention Institute, October 2024.

CLIMATE JUSTICE & RESILIENCE

PI recognizes that the places that we live, work, play, and learn are all affected by the impacts of climate change. To support the health, safety, and wellbeing of our communities, public health must support bold, all-of-government approaches to climate justice. We support policies that work to prevent, address, and mitigate the deleterious health, safety, and wellbeing impacts of climate change. We also recognize that achieving climate justice requires prioritizing and centering the voices of those who are most affected by, and vulnerable to, the effects of climate change, especially communities of color and low wealth. Our Priorities include:

- Infrastructure investments to prevent the severity of future climate-related events and bolster community resilience (e.g., increased parks and green space, tree canopies, urban greening efforts, safe and affordable climate resilient housing, clean water, increased public transit, etc.)
- Strengthening efforts that support community healing from climate-related trauma and address the connections between climate change, adverse weather events and the impacts on community wellbeing and resilience
- Advocating for solutions that center and support those who are disproportionately most vulnerable to the risks of climate change, including communities of color and low wealth communities
- Environmental and climate policy that invests in future generations, including supporting the demands of young changemakers
- The development of an environmentally conscious workforce—including creation of green jobs and an economy that embeds environmental justice

IMMIGRATION JUSTICE

PI recognizes that immigration justice is essential to public health and supports a humane and just immigration system that strengthens and safeguards the health, safety, wellbeing, and dignity of immigrant families and individuals. We celebrate the many ways immigrants from across the world enrich U.S. communities and culture and reject harmful and divisive “us vs. them” narratives. Our priorities include:

- Full access to essential public health and health-promoting resources and opportunities, including the elimination of immigration-related restrictions on accessing these resources[†]
- Greater investments in immigrant mental health and wellbeing
- Policies that reunify and keep families together
- Prohibitions on immigration enforcement in ‘sensitive’ locations including schools and school bus stops, healthcare facilities, social services, places of worship, disaster or emergency response sites, and public demonstrations
- Expanded and expedited paths to citizenship, greater opportunities for authorized and permanent residency (including parole in place), and access to asylum

[†] “Full access” includes robust language support and translation services