

Top Priorities

Our policy priorities include legislation, ordinances, policy implementation, planning, and administrative and system changes to advance health equity and human rights. We remain nimble and responsive to ongoing policy threats—and act with community partners in the fight for justice. Each category includes a purpose and lists policy priorities.

Aging Equity

Aging equity, in which people can live and age in place within their home and community of choice with dignity, care, and purpose

- A high-quality multi-sector plan for aging in Illinois with aging equity at its center

Healing-centered and Trauma-informed

Public and non-governmental agencies and organizations institute trauma-informed, healing-centered policies and practices

- Legislation and administrative changes to advance Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force priorities

Health Workforce

The public health and health care sectors offer high-quality jobs, with hiring and retention policies that advance equity, diversity, and inclusion

- Certification, reimbursement, and billing models to support community health workers, doulas, and other key public health roles
- Building the next generation of the health workforce by expanding health career pathways by developing enhanced resources and support

Health Care as a Human Right

The human right to health care is guaranteed through universal public health insurance coverage and equitable health care that is free at the point of care

- Protect Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act
- Adopt a Prescription Drug Affordability Board
- Sustainable funding, accountable governance, and equitable health care at Cook County Health

- Integrate Cook County and Chicago behavioral health initiatives
- Expansion of the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults/Seniors programs
- Welcoming and affirming health care for all people at all health care settings

Housing Justice

Healthy, safe, affordable, equitable, and accessible housing for all

- Chicago Healthy Housing Ordinance to pilot proactive rental unit inspections
- Just cause for eviction ordinance to limit evictions and provide relocation assistance
- Home repair funding legislation to support low-income people maintaining their homes

Public Health System Capacity

Well-funded, high-capacity, collaborative governmental public health prepared to address both health inequities and public health emergencies

- Sufficient and flexible public funding for the Chicago and Cook County health departments
- Enhanced collaboration between the Chicago and Cook County health departments

Reproductive Justice

Reproductive justice, in which all people have the right to have a child, not have a child, and to raise children in safe, healthy environments

- Ensure equitable and accessible reproductive health, contraception, and abortion services
- Advance licensed certified professional midwives' role as primary birth attendants
- A state strategic plan to ensure equitable access to doulas and certified professional midwives
- Increase birth center reimbursements

Health & Medicine's mission is to build power and momentum for social justice and health equity in Illinois.

Our vision is a society free of social and health inequities so that all people can attain their full potential.

2025 POLICY AGENDA: ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Additional Priorities

Health & Medicine takes an inclusive view of health and what is required for health equity. Our vision includes racial justice, economic justice, gender justice, social justice, and human rights. The items below represent additional policy issues of importance to Health & Medicine.

We provide support for these agenda items as we are able, aligning these issues with our top priorities listed above. We invite current and potential partners to reach out to Health & Medicine regarding critical moments in which we can support policy initiatives that align with health equity, such as signing a letter, giving testimony, or supporting an effort in some other way.

Aging Equity

- Expanded and improved long-term care workforce
- Accountability for the Colbert, Williams, and Ligas consent decrees

Behavioral Health

- Improved response to the opioid crisis, including widespread use of harm reduction initiatives, such as distribution of Naloxone, needle exchanges, and safe consumption sites

Climate and Environmental Justice

- Environmental justice progress, including passage of a cumulative impact ordinance in Chicago
- Tree canopy equity to provide benefits such as green space, urban cooling, and rainwater cycling
- Strong public health response to the climate emergency and decarbonization of our economy

Community Safety

- Defunding and abolition of police and investment in the health and social services and supports that help make people safe
- Creation of alternative systems for accountability and safety
- Decarceration of prisons and jails, including moving older adults out of prison and providing improved transition supports
- Improvement of healthcare in carceral settings
- Stronger record sealing and expungement laws
- Public health approaches to gun violence

Economic Justice

- Wages and benefits that help all workers and their families to thrive
- Mandatory earned leave
- Legal requirement for all internships to be paid
- Progressive income tax for Illinois
- Expansion of guaranteed basic income programs
- Protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs
- Expansion of child tax credits
- Universal paid paternity leave
- Free universal childcare

Education Equity

- Wages and benefits that help all workers and their families to thrive
- Mandatory earned leave
- Legal requirement for all internships to be paid
- Progressive income tax for Illinois
- Expansion of guaranteed basic income programs
- Protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs
- Expansion of child tax credits
- Universal paid paternity leave
- Free universal childcare

Human Rights

- Single-payer health insurance system, with care provided free at the point of service for all people
- Defense, services, and supports for immigrant communities
- Promote democratic engagement, including equitable and accessible voting laws
- Oppose authoritarianism and fascism

Public Health Equity

- Accelerated lead water line replacement
- Healthy, affordable, accessible food for all
- Improved personal protective equipment (PPE) policies and planning
- Improved indoor air quality standards for air filtration and ventilation
- Improved application of complete streets policies to enable safe freedom of movement
- Free and accessible public transportation