HEALTH & MEDICINE
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

2025 Impact Report



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

How We Work: We are an independent policy center that conducts research, educates, and collaborates with other groups to advocate policies and impact health systems to improve the health status of all people.

Vision: A society free of social and health inequities so that all people can attain their full potential.







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Letter from Our Leadership

Dear Friends,



As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share our 2025 Impact Report as a snapshot of Health & Medicine's work during a year of resilience, momentum, and continued progress toward health equity across Illinois. This report captures the collective efforts of our staff, board, Fellows, partners, and supporters who show up day after day to advance justice in health systems and public policy.

Founded by Dr. Quentin Young and Professor John McKnight to fight back against the Reagan Administration's attacks on public health, Health & Medicine has built on that legacy ever since. Throughout 2025, we continued to engage in policy advocacy, research, and coalition-based initiatives that address some of the most pressing public health challenges of our time. We hope that as you read this Impact Report, you will be inspired by the work we have done together, fighting for initiatives that have strengthened the public health workforce, advanced reproductive justice, organized for aging equity, promoted trauma-informed systems, and secured sustained public health funding. Together with you, we have never wavered from our long-standing commitment to confronting structural inequities and centering the voices of those most affected.

Health & Medicine's role as a convener and collaborator remains central to our impact. Our progress is rooted in deep relationships with community-based organizations, advocates, practitioners, researchers, and students who bring expertise, urgency, and lived experience to this work. This year's successes highlight the power of authentic partnership, coalition-building, and collective action.

As we look ahead, 2026 will be a milestone year for Health & Medicine, marking our 45th anniversary and the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program's 30th anniversary. These anniversaries invite us to reflect on the values that have guided us since our founding and to renew our commitment to the future we are building together.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in this work, and helping make our impact possible. We look forward to continuing this journey with you in the year ahead.

With gratitude,

A. Gita Krishnaswamy
Interim Executive Director

Steve Rothschild
Board President

Honoring Margie Schaps' Legacy

In December 2025, Health & Medicine honored the retirement of longtime Executive Director Margie Schaps, recognizing her decades of leadership, courage, and deep commitment to advancing health equity. During the retirement celebration, Margie reflected on Health & Medicine's enduring belief that meaningful change happens when we walk alongside one another in pursuit of justice and equity.

For more than thirty years, Margie helped shape Health & Medicine into a trusted force for policy change and community-centered advocacy across Illinois. She helped establish the independent Cook County Health and Hospitals System Board, strengthening governance, accountability, and public stewardship within one of the nation's largest safety-net health systems. She also advocated for stronger Medicaid reimbursement policies, helping secure more sustainable funding structures that support access to care for communities most impacted by inequity.

Margie's leadership was instrumental in elevating aging as a critical health equity issue. Through years of coalition-building and policy leadership, she advanced reforms that expanded home- and community-based services and helped ensure older adults can age with dignity and choice. This work continues today through the ongoing development of the Illinois Multi-Sector Plan on Aging, a direct result of Health & Medicine's dedicated advocacy under her leadership.

While Margie's official tenure has concluded, her vision remains embedded in our culture and work. In her honor, Health & Medicine



established the Margie Schaps Fund for Emerging Public Health Challenges, a flexible fund that enables us to respond quickly to urgent and evolving issues. The fund supports advocacy, research, convening, and rapid-response efforts that often lack designated funding, ensuring we can remain nimble and responsive as new health equity challenges arise.

Margie's legacy lives on through the people, partnerships, and systems she helped build—and in Health & Medicine's continued commitment to justice, community, and lasting change.

Our Impact

At Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, our work is rooted in the belief that every person deserves access to equitable, high-quality health care and the opportunity to live a healthy life. In the past year, our programs have continued to grow and evolve, addressing systemic challenges and building pathways to health equity. From workforce development to aging equity and from community health to trauma-informed practices, our interconnected initiatives reflect a comprehensive approach to creating lasting change.

Aging Equity Center

Aging is a universal experience, yet it often intersects with inequities that can leave older adults marginalized. This year, our Illinois Aging Together campaign achieved a landmark milestone with the completion of the Multi-Sector Plan for Aging, with Health & Medicine staff serving on the Community Advisory Committee throughout its development. Under contract with the Illinois Department on Aging, we held nine engagement sessions with hundreds of people and organizations across the state to ensure the plan included the voices of all. Released in January 2026, EngAging Illinois establishes a decade-long roadmap for the state, outlining strategies for creating livable and connected communities, ensuring health for all ages, investing in caregivers, and affording aging.

Chicago Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

Our AHEC program connects education, training, and career opportunities to strengthen the health workforce in underserved communities. This year, our Community Health Worker (CHW) Youth Summer Pathway Program provided a five-week paid training to 20 high school students throughout Cook County. Maureen Burns, a recent AHEC scholar herself and the program's instructor, co-authored an abstract about the summer program with AHEC Director Ronisha Edwards-Elliott and presented highlights at APHA's annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

Maureen shares, "Thank you, Health & Medicine, for allowing me to have such a fabulous experience as an intern and instructor of the CHW Pathway Program—and to all the young CHWs in our cohorts for caring about your communities and using your voices."

In addition, through the Speakers' Bureau and AHEC Scholars program, Chicago AHEC remains committed to providing exposure to health care careers to students in Chicago Public Schools, Illinois universities, and beyond. "I am honored to be a mentor and partner to such wonderful future public health professionals," Ronisha shares.



Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program

The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program has been a vital element of the Chicago health landscape since 1996, engaging developing health professionals with community organizations to pilot innovative approaches to health equity. Today, their collaborations with underserved communities in our region are more important than ever. By working directly with community members to design and implement critical service-learning projects, the Fellows engage as effective allies and build on existing community strengths. The program supported 26 Fellows who dedicated over 6,300 hours of service, directly impacting more than 2,300 community members.

In 2025, we strengthened the Schweitzer Fellowship by gathering educational curricula and programming strategies from previous Fellows and sharing them with the current cohort, allowing Fellows to build on the experiences and lessons of those who came before them. We also deepened connections with academic partners and community organizations to ensure the Fellowship continues to meet the evolving needs of our vital partners. Throughout the year, Fellows implemented community-driven projects to advance meaningful, lasting change, while alumni from the program (Fellows for Life) pursued Seed Grants to continue their project contributions, supporting foot checks and accessible specialty medical care for unhoused people, as well as Advance Care Planning outreach to older adults. Together, these efforts keep the Schweitzer Fellowship a dynamic force for health equity while equipping emerging leaders with the skills and connections to partner with communities for lasting change.



Right: Nicole Walkowiak, RN, 2024–25 Frank J. Indihar Fellow. Below: 2024–25 Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows





2025 Equity Interns

Left to right:
Ruth Nwatu
Andrea Kimpson*
Maureen Burns
Ray Lowstetter
Muhammad Saif Imtiaz

**HiteHass Equity Intern*

Equity Intern Program

Drs. Marsie Hass and Scott Hite generously support one equity intern each year through the HassHite Equity Internship. Drs. Hass and Hite established the named internship in 2023 to further the work of Health & Medicine co-founder Dr. Quentin Young by bringing more equity to health care. "Although there have been many initiatives to further this goal by educating and encouraging doctors to view health equity as an inalienable right, the country has not yet come far enough to actualize Dr. Young's vision," they say. Rooted in classical rabbinic teachings, Drs. Hass and Hite believe that social policy legislation should provide extra protection to those potentially at a disadvantage. "We believe that we must continue to do what we can to promote equity in both health and medicine."

> "Health & Medicine is a place where every team member is deeply passionate about improving lives. This experience has been both a valuable learning opportunity and a chance to connect with dedicated advocates for health equity."
>
> —**Ruth Nwatu,** Spring 2025 Intern

> "We support Health & Medicine because we believe in their mission to advance health equity and create a more just health care system. Their work aligns with our commitment to promoting equity and ensuring everyone has access to the care and support they need."
>
> —**Marsie Hass MD,** and **Scott Hite MD**

Community-Based Birth Justice Initiatives

This year, Health & Medicine partnered with the Black Midwifery Collective and dozens of community advocates to create a state strategic plan for Community-Based Birth Justice. We conducted several assessments and co-hosted an annual summit to better understand how to grow and sustain community-based birth workers and out-of-hospital perinatal care. The strategic plan will be ready in early 2026 and will include policy and programmatic recommendations for improving the infrastructure, workforce, funding, and patient experience for community-based birth options. Additionally, we continued our decades-long leadership for the birth center movement through chairing the Illinois Birth Center Task Force. With five birth centers operating and two more in development across the state, we will continue our advocacy and other efforts to strengthen and expand birth centers in Illinois in the years to come.

100+ stakeholders participated in the first-ever Illinois Birth Justice Summit.
40+ community-based birth workers contributed to the development of the strategic plan.

> **"Our communities have never lacked knowledge—we've lacked power and resources. Historically, communities of color have organized to secure a seat at the table; this is a more formalized attempt to do just that. This process is about restoring both power and resources. When birth workers are supported, respected, and listened to, birthing people have better outcomes and better experiences."**
>
> **—Star August Ali,** Black Midwifery Collective Executive Director & Founder, Certified Professional Midwife CPM, LM, ASM, CD



Good Jobs Chicagoland

The Good Jobs Challenge funded the training, wraparound support, and administrative costs for individuals from the South and West sides of Chicago/Cook County to enter high-demand public health and health care jobs. We trained future CNAs, RNs, EMTs, paramedics, doulas, lactation counselors, substance abuse and peer counselors, and medical assistants to join the workforce.

> **"This grant will relieve a lot of financial burden from our shoulders. My final goal is to become a Doctor in Medicine, and I intend to spend the next two years gaining clinical experience to enhance my application. Thank you for making this possible!"**
>
> —GJC Medical Assistant Student

338 individuals received free training and supportive services to enter public health and health care jobs.
207 secured employment as of the grant ending in September.
40+ employer partners and **20 training providers** participated in pathways.

Health Care Safety Net Center

The Health Care Safety Net Center at Health & Medicine works to strengthen the safety net—the policies, programs, and institutions that provide health care for people who would otherwise go without it. At the heart of this Center's work is Health & Medicine's longstanding belief that health care is a human right and must be honored and upheld as such. As health reforms are enacted locally and nationally, and as federal changes undermine the health care safety net, our health systems reform leadership is increasingly important. Our work develops thoughtful implementation strategies to expand care for all Illinois residents while ensuring stakeholder voices are heard and integrated into new policies. Health & Medicine works to expand insurance coverage and strengthen it to better meet people's health care needs, with the ultimate goal of universal coverage. We are a long-term supporter of Cook County Health, which provides a majority of free and reduced-cost care in Cook County.

Health Sector Workforce Initiatives

The Public Health Workforce Collaborative, Chicagoland Healthcare Workforce Collaborative, and Health Careers Youth Pathways Committee bring together workforce stakeholders to identify and address shared systems challenges that limit the health workforce. We plan, learn, and work together to ensure that health sector jobs are accessible, equitable, and sustainable for workers, employers, and communities. This year, we hosted bus tours to introduce high school students to various career options, strategized on how to address workforce shortages at the Respiratory Therapy Summit, and helped build infrastructure to enable community organizations to take advantage of Medicaid reimbursement, among many other activities.

The Youth Advisory Council has been a critical voice in shaping the youth pathways ecosystem, building power through youth leadership and translating youth needs into actionable recommendations for program leaders to make their offerings more culturally responsive. The Youth Advisory Council provided resume support for early-career professionals, connected their peers with hands-on career navigation tools, and developed and produced digital outreach content featuring inspiring stories of young health professionals who have overcome barriers.

100+ community partners engaged across the three workforce collaboratives.

30+ meetings and events hosted.

11 Learning Collaboratives hosted.

134 total CHW participants.

Additionally, we continue to support the growth and sustainability of the Community Health Worker workforce through convening the Suburban Cook County CHW Learning Collaborative with the Sinai Urban Health Institute and co-chairing the Illinois Community Health Worker Association's Workforce Development Committee.

> **"By bringing together workers, training providers, academic institutions, employers, community organizations, funders, and other stakeholders, we provide unique spaces for partners to learn together, challenge each other, and collaborate on effective strategies that meet the needs of this growing, essential workforce."**
>
> **—Anna Yankelev,** Director of Strategic Workforce Initiatives, Health & Medicine

Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative

The Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative brings together partners from across sectors to expand understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their lifelong impact on health and well-being. Guided by a life-course and equity framework, the Collaborative works to prevent trauma, strengthen healing-centered systems, and advance policies that reduce the frequency and intergenerational transmission of ACEs. Through education, advocacy, and cross-sector coordination, the Collaborative amplifies the work of communities and organizations across Illinois and drives systems change rooted in resilience, prevention, and healing.

On April 23, 2025, the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative stood with advocates and policymakers for the first ACEs Awareness Day in Springfield. The day highlighted the impacts of ACEs and emphasized the need for increased investment in prevention. The Collaborative partnered with Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Illinois and others to organize the event. Representative Michelle Mussman read the statewide proclamation, reaffirming the commitment to understanding and preventing childhood trauma, with support from Representative Robyn Gabel.



Kristin Kaufman, Director of Programs, PCA, and Mayra Diaz, Senior Policy Analyst, Health & Medicine, at ACEs Awareness Day

Adrian Rodriguez of the Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force also spoke at the event and stressed the need to improve workforce development and cross-sector partnerships to address ACEs and promote prevention.

Together, these efforts strengthened statewide momentum for trauma prevention and healing-centered policy. The Collaborative will continue to advance a unified, cross-sector movement to ensure that every child, family, and community in Illinois can thrive.

Public Health Equity Center

Our Public Health Equity Center drives systemic change by advocating for increased public health funding, stronger local health departments, and policies that address structural inequities. In 2024, we launched the Fund Public Health campaign, securing endorsements from nearly 90 organizations in a collective call for action. Together, we advocated for increased local funding for the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Cook County Department of Public Health, ensuring resources match the needs of our communities. In 2025, we continued to build on this momentum, pressing for increased public health funding across the region.

Recognizing housing as a critical social determinant of health, we also played a key role in advancing housing justice in Chicago by supporting ordinances for proactive housing inspections and just cause evictions, reflecting our commitment to addressing the root causes of inequity.

Finally, keeping collaboration at the heart of our work, we helped develop a budget amendment ordinance to strengthen public health funding as part of the Public Health & Safety for Chicago coalition, while our membership in the Cook County Equity Fund Taskforce kept health equity central to local policy decisions.

Trainings on Trauma, Health & Healing

Health & Medicine's Trauma-Informed Training Program equips professionals across Illinois with the knowledge, tools, and shared language needed to recognize the impact of trauma and promote healing in their organizations and communities. Rooted in public health and social justice, our trainings bridge evidence-based information with practical skills, helping participants reduce harm, build trust, and strengthen environments where staff, clients, and communities can thrive.

This year, our Trauma-Informed Training Program reached participants across Illinois, including undergraduate and graduate health work students, community health workers, teachers and educators, medical assistants, library staff, and public interest and immigration attorneys, in sessions on trauma, burnout, and collective harm. With support from the Illinois Department of Public Health, we ran trainings for health providers across the state who work with recently arrived immigrant communities in frontline roles, bolstering their knowledge and skills in understanding manifestations of trauma, integrating multi-level healing interventions, and assessing their organizational strengths and needs to continue this work sustainably. Overwhelmingly, participants reported that our trainings enhanced their understanding of and confidence in addressing these topics in their work and would recommend them to other professionals. We closed with sessions on burnout, where we heard from a range of workers about the unique stressors emerging from the current political climate at an unprecedented rate.

15 trainings
- 6 Trauma and Health
- 6 Burnout and Toxic Stress
- 3 Collective Trauma

330 participants

12 organizations/ tables

In fighting authoritarian attempts to erode social cohesion and well-being, we believe that equipping people with evidence-based, comprehensive, and accessible information about how stress and harm affect our health, along with tangible, actionable healing tools, is one of our most imperative and powerful tactics.

> **"Our Trauma-Informed Training Program pairs evidence-based education with practical tools to help organizations strengthen relationships, reduce harm, and build supportive, equitable environments. When people understand trauma, burnout, and collective harm, they're better equipped to create spaces where healing and resilience can take root."**
>
> —**Hannah Shevrin,** Training and Capacity-Building Manager





Advocacy in Action

Solidarity Summit for A People's Agenda

On May 17, 2025, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group joined forces with seventeen Chicago-based partners to convene the Solidarity Summit for a People's Agenda. The summit created space for community members with diverse experiences to engage in meaningful dialogue, learning, and connection. Presenters discussed the historical and contemporary forces that have shaped today's barriers to solidarity, particularly within the context of immigration struggles. Guided by trained facilitators, attendees participated in a series of large- and small-group conversations and received a toolkit to spark thoughtful discussion.

Throughout the summit, participants reflected deeply on what it takes to build bridges across communities that have long been pitted against one another. Testimonies highlighted both the obstacles and the possibilities ahead, with many emphasizing the need to fully include groups that have been routinely marginalized in these discussions. The day closed with a sense of hope, new information, and skills for participants to share within their respective communities.

Public Health & Safety Coalition

In 2025, Health & Medicine served as one of six anchor organizations steering the Public Health and Safety (PHS) Coalition, playing a leading role in shaping and advancing a historic campaign for protections and investments that keep Chicago's communities healthy and safe, especially amid the ongoing attacks on our city by the federal administration. Working alongside the PHS coalition and the People's Unity Platform, we made meaningful progress in this year's city budget that reflects years of organizing and prioritizes the health, safety, and dignity of Chicagoans.

Health & Medicine took the lead on efforts to protect funding for the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), a critical investment given the recent expiration of COVID-19 dollars, which made up a significant portion of CDPH's funding. As a result of our efforts to engage the Mayor's Office, City Council, and other city officials, we prevented a reduction in funding for CDPH, allowing the department to hold steady in 2026.

Along with this win, we played a supportive role in securing these other victories:

- A new tax on social media corporations to fund public mental health care and non-police crisis response
- Redirection of 500 police department vacancies toward critical public services
- Expanded investments in youth jobs and increased early childhood funding
- $1 billion TIF surplus reinvested into schools, parks, libraries, and city services
- Prevention of a garbage tax hike on working families

Despite facing a well-funded corporate opposition backed by billionaire interests, our coalition prevailed and made great strides in changing the narrative. Our involvement helped bring the idea of equitable revenue to the forefront of the conversation, affirming what communities have long said: corporations must pay their fair share. These wins mark a significant step toward changing the material conditions of our neighborhoods and advancing a public health–focused vision for Chicago's future.

Driving Change: Testimony, Advocacy, Conference Presentations

Testimony



Testimony to Cook County Health Board of Directors

Delivered January 24, 2025

Wesley Epplin, Policy Director, delivered testimony to the Cook County Health Board of Directors, highlighting the urgent need to address immigrant fears and threats caused by unjust ICE raids. Recommendations included establishing a dedicated committee, mandatory staff training on immigrant rights, and improved legal support and signage in health care facilities.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025-01-24-Testimony.HMPRG-to-Cook-County-Health-Board.pdf

Rally Remarks–Rally Against Fascism

Delivered February 5, 2025

Wesley Epplin, Policy Director, gave remarks at the Rally Against Fascism, warning against attacks on public health and calling for collective action to protect health equity and democracy.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2025-02-05-Remarks-at-Rally-Against-Fascism.pdf

Press Conference Remarks—Hazel M. Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance

Delivered April 16, 2025

Wesley Epplin, Policy Director, delivered remarks at a press conference supporting the Hazel M. Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance. Speaking on behalf of both Health & Medicine and the Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County, he emphasized the urgent need to address environmental racism and the unacceptable health inequities facing communities across Chicago, calling on city leaders to recognize that protecting public health is their most important responsibility.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025-04-16-Wesley-Epplin-HMPRG-Cumulative-Impact-Ordinance-Presser-Remarks.pdf

Testimony to Cook County Board of Commissioners

Delivered July 16, 2025

Mayra Diaz, Senior Policy Analyst, delivered testimony to the Cook County Board of Commissioners during the FY2026 budget hearings. The testimony called for increased corporate funding for the Cook County Department of Public Health, citing significant health inequities in Suburban Cook County and the growing threat of federal funding cuts, and included a request for an $8 million increase in CCDPH's corporate funding compared to FY2025.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2025-07-16-Testimony-to-Cook-County-officials.pdf

Testimony to Chicago City Council

Delivered July 22, 2025

Mayra Diaz, Senior Policy Analyst, delivered testimony to Chicago's City Council at a hearing for the Committee on Health and Human Relations. The hearing focused on a resolution introduced by Alderman Anthony Quezada and Alderwoman Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez condemning disinformation from Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-21-07_Misinformation-Hearing-Remarks_Health-Human-Relations-Committee.pdf



Health & Medicine's policy director, Wesley Epplin, met with Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson regarding the city's FY2026 budget, representing our Fund Public Health campaign and as one of the anchor organizations of the Public Health & Safety Coalition.

Testimony to Cook County Board of Commissioners

Delivered October 15, 2025

Wesley Epplin, Policy Director, delivered testimony to the Cook County Board of Commissioners during the FY2026 budget hearings. The testimony called for increased investment in public health and stronger protections for immigrant communities across Cook County and included recommendations to strengthen the Cook County Department of Public Health, safeguard Cook County Health's sustainability, and defend residents from harmful federal enforcement practices.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-10-15-Testimony-Cook-County-Board-Budget-Hearing.pdf

Advocacy

Press Conference Remarks—Fund Public Health

Delivered September 17, 2025

Wesley Epplin, Policy Director, spoke at a press conference on behalf of the Fund Public Health campaign. The remarks called on Mayor Johnson and Chicago's City Council to commit $52 million in additional corporate funding to the Chicago Department of Public Health in FY2026, citing longstanding health inequities, decades of public health disinvestment, and threats to federal funding under the current administration.

Read the full remarks here: www.hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2025-09-17-HMPRG-comments.-Fund-Public-Health.-Presser-w.-Public-Health-Safety.pdf

Health Workers Oppose Violent and Unjust Actions by Federal Agents

December 2025

Read the remarks here: hmprgjpstg.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/Statement_-Health-Workers-Oppose-Violent-and-Unjust-Actions-by-Federal-Agents.docx.pdf

Conference Presentations



Making All Jobs Good Jobs: Workforce Development Strategies that Improve Job Quality

Presented by Anna Yankelev

Too many workers, particularly Black, Brown, and immigrant workers, are trapped in bad jobs: jobs that do not pay a living wage, offer benefits or opportunities for advancement, or otherwise treat workers fairly and with respect. This session explored alternative strategies that improve job quality, including building worker power and centering workers in workforce development design and delivery, co-enforcing policies that improve job quality, and collaborating with new (and familiar) partners.

Private/Public Partnership to Sustain, Elevate, and Expand the CHW Workforce

Presented by Makeda Coutee, Kim Jay, Darcie Moller, Gillian

Health & Medicine had the honor of presenting at the Illinois Public Health Association's 84th Annual Public Health Workforce Conference. Our session brought together leaders and partners committed to building a stronger future for Community Health Workers (CHWs) across Illinois. We're grateful for the opportunity to share our work, exchange ideas, and continue pushing forward solutions that advance equity, sustainability, and recognition for CHWs.

Teen CHWs: Investigating the Challenges and Benefits of Engaging Marginalized Youth in CHW Training

By Ronisha Edwards-Elliott and Maureen Burns

An abstract co-authored by Ronisha Edwards-Elliott, Director of Chicago AHEC and Workforce Programs at Health & Medicine, and Maureen Burns, Community Health Worker and instructor for Health & Medicine's Summer High School CHW Pathway Program, was accepted for presentation at the 2025 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting.

The research examines opportunities and challenges associated with training teenagers as Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Cook County. Building on Health & Medicine's Summer High School CHW Pathway Program, the study explores existing training opportunities, barriers to youth participation, and the potential for CHW training to introduce young people to careers in public health. The findings contribute to ongoing conversations about expanding and strengthening the CHW workforce in Illinois.

Read the abstract here: https://hmprgjpstg.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/APHA-Abstract-Ronisha-and-Maureen-3-26-25.pdf

In the Media

Media Consultation and Press Coverage in 2025

As a trusted resource on health equity matters in Illinois, Health & Medicine elevates issues of health and social justice by collaborating with the media. This coverage serves to increase attention to core issues, provide accurate information and analysis to the public, and raise awareness of Health & Medicine's mission and programming. Throughout the year, *Chicago Sun-Times, Crain's Chicago Business, Illinois Health News,* WBEZ, and other news outlets sought insights from Health & Medicine for coverage of various public health and health-related topics.

Medicaid Advocacy

PUBLISHED: February 24, 2025
Commentary: Republicans' threatened Medicaid cuts would cause disease, death and destruction
Crain's Chicago Business/Forum
Read the article here:

PUBLISHED: February 24, 2025
What Illinois faces if congressional Republicans slash Medicaid
Crain's Chicago Business/Forum
Read the article here:

OP-ED: April 29, 2025
Even if you don't depend on Medicaid, you'll likely be hurt if Republicans cut it
MSNBC/MS NOW
Read the article here:

PUBLISHED: March 4, 2025
Can Medicaid escape Republican Congressional cuts?
The 21st Show, Illinois Public Media/NPR
Listen to the interview here:



Politics & Policy

PUBLISHED: April 16, 2025

Supporters rally for industrial zoning ordinance aimed at curbing pollution

Crain's Chicago Business

Read the article here:

PUBLISHED: August 7, 2025

Letter to the editor:

Very few left unscathed with 'Big Beautiful Bill'

Chicago Sun-Times

Read the letter here:

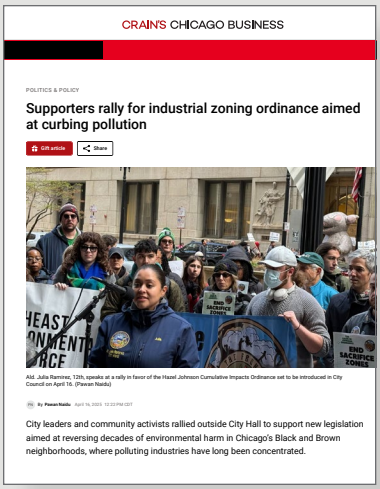
OP-ED: October 29, 2025

Opinion: Chicago's progress on safety shows Johnson's head tax deserves support

Crain's Chicago Business

Read the article here:

CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS


CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS

POLITICS & POLICY

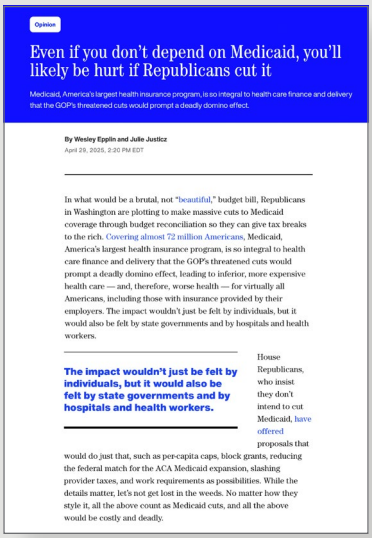
Supporters rally for industrial zoning ordinance aimed at curbing pollution

Gift article | Share

Ald. Julia Ramirez, 12th, speaks at a rally in favor of the Hazel Johnson Cumulative Impacts Ordinance set to be introduced in City Council on April 16. (Pawan Naidu)

By Pawan Naidu April 16, 2025 12:23 PM CDT

City leaders and community activists rallied outside City Hall to support new legislation aimed at reversing decades of environmental harm in Chicago's Black and Brown neighborhoods, where polluting industries have long been concentrated.


Opinion

Even if you don't depend on Medicaid, you'll likely be hurt if Republicans cut it

Medicaid, America's largest health insurance program, is so integral to health care finance and delivery that the GOP's threatened cuts would prompt a deadly domino effect.

By Wesley Epplin and Julie Justicz
April 29, 2025, 2:20 PM EDT

In what would be a brutal, not "beautiful," budget bill, Republicans in Washington are plotting to make massive cuts to Medicaid coverage through budget reconciliation so they can give tax breaks to the rich. Covering almost 72 million Americans, Medicaid, America's largest health insurance program, is so integral to health care finance and delivery that the GOP's threatened cuts would prompt a deadly domino effect, leading to inferior, more expensive health care — and, therefore, worse health — for virtually all Americans, including those with insurance provided by their employers. The impact wouldn't just be felt by individuals, but it would also be felt by state governments and by hospitals and health workers.

The impact wouldn't just be felt by individuals, but it would also be felt by state governments and by hospitals and health workers.

House Republicans, who insist they don't intend to cut Medicaid, have offered proposals that would do just that, such as per-capita caps, block grants, reducing the federal match for the ACA Medicaid expansion, slashing provider taxes, and work requirements as possibilities. While the details matter, let's not get lost in the weeds. No matter how they style it, all the above count as Medicaid cuts, and all the above would be costly and deadly.

THE 21ST SHOW

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

2025 Health & Medicine Awards Gala

Each year, Health & Medicine hosts an Awards Gala at which we honor extraordinary public health leaders whose work embodies our shared commitment to equity and social justice. Congratulations to this year's award winners!

Health Awards

Jesus "Manny" Estrada
Chief Operating Officer, Cermak Health Services, Cook County Health

Booker Marshall
Manager of Health Education, Potocsnak Family Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine, Lurie Children's Hospital

Medicine Award

Dan Lustig, PsyD, CAADC, CODPII
President & CEO, Haymarket Center

Policy Award

Dalia Galvan Morales
Associate Director of Strategy and Government Relations, Erie Family Health Centers

Research Award

Corinne Kodama, PhD
Senior Research Analyst, Women Employed

Group Award

Promoviendo, Abogando y Educando por la Salud (PAES) Network, Enlace Chicago

Emerging Leader Award

Dayna Pham
Medical Student, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine
Psoriatic Disease Advocate, National Psoriasis Foundation



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—**A. Gita Krishnaswamy,** Interim Executive Director, Health & Medicine

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Financial Report

January 1—December 31, 2025

Unaudited financials as of January 15, 2026. Final audited financials will be posted on the website when complete.

Statement of Financial Position

Assets

Cash + Cash Equivalents	$1,053,772
Accounts Receivable	1,121,435
Prepaid Expenses	4,346
Total Current Assets	**$2,199,553**
Other Assets	269,241
Total Assets	**$2,448,794**

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities Accounts

Payable and Accrued Expenses	$242,711
Payroll Liabilities	4,786
Total Liabilities	**$523,884**

Net Assets

Unrestricted	$686,356
Temporarily Restricted	1,452,904
Total Net Assets	**$1,924,9111**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$2,448,794**

Statement of Activities

Support and Revenue

Grants and Contributions	$1,709,019
Government Contracts	855,783
Special Events	247,361
Program Income	104,881
Interest	11,006
Total Support and Revenue	**$2,928,050**

Expenses

Program Services	$2,451,071
Support Services Administrative	408,512
Fundraising	282,816
Total Expenses	**$3,142,399**

Net Assets Beginning of Year	$ 2,139,260
Net Assets End of Year	**$1,924,911**

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