***Health & Medicine Policy Research Group***

***2020 Policy Priorities***

*Health & Medicine’s policy priorities advance our core* [*values and mission*](http://www.hmprg.org/about-us/mission-vision-philosophy/) *of health equity through research, education, advocacy, and collaborative action.*

*We support communities by addressing root causes of health inequities, focusing on policy, governance, and practice changes at the structural level. Our work is grounded in the belief that structural racism, class injustice, and other forms of oppression are the fundamental causes of health inequities, the unjust, remediable differences in health status and outcomes across different populations and communities. Policies and systems that shape the distribution of money, power, and resources stratify access to the social determinants of health—the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. We use equity, human rights, and trauma-informed lenses to advocate for progressive change. We seek to advance equity in areas like housing, economic justice, and education which enhance wellbeing, and contribute to growing national movements for social justice and health equity.*

*Based in Chicago, we focus on local, regional, and statewide issues and are committed to resisting and responding to regressive and discriminatory federal policies that impact communities throughout Illinois and the nation.*

**Economic Justice**

* Promote the replacement of Illinois’s flat income tax with a fair tax that will lower rates for working and middle-class families while ensuring we have the revenue needed to fund health reform and provide core services to Illinois communities.
* Advance efforts for paid family and parental leave as important steps toward greater economic security for Illinois families.
* Protect and strengthen programs and policies like SNAP, TANF, and the earned income tax credit that help people stay out of poverty.
* Support policies that advance quality jobs, worker protections, and other equitable practices like paid internship opportunities.

**Health & Healthcare**

* Contribute to efforts to support universal health insurance coverage and a health system where healthcare is honored as a human right.
* Track Medicaid Omnibus implementation and new redetermination rules to ensure the state follows recent legislation aimed at addressing gaps in coverage.
* Lead effort to advance a State Plan on Aging and convene people and organizations to develop a vision of how our state can comprehensively support and address older adults’ health.
* Develop and advance a coordinated approach to publicly provided free and reduced-cost care to ensure all patients receive appropriate and timely care.
* Protect a critical arm of the healthcare safety net by advocating for a strong, fully-funded Cook County Health system.
* Initiate a process for constructive, proactive planning for the healthcare safety net in Cook County, incorporating community voice and the strategic needs of the region as a whole.
* Champion efforts to ensure that all people—particularly undocumented and other marginalized populations—have access to safe, affirming, and welcoming healthcare and social services.
* Improve healthcare for people who are incarcerated.
* Support healthcare providers and health institutions to adopt and advance trauma-informed policies and practices which enhance patient care and improve wellbeing.
* Promote the affordability of prescription drugs by supporting adoption of a prescription drug affordability board.
* Support reversal of the Free Care Rule in Illinois, allowing school districts to bill Medicaid for all services provided to Medicaid-enrolled students.

**Health Workforce**

* Encourage healthcare and public health organizations to support workers, address trauma, and prevent and mitigate burnout.
* Reduce barriers to employment, including stronger record expungement laws, fully-funded MAP grants, and transportation that links people to jobs.
* Advocate for the expansion of scholarship and loan repayment programs to increase accessibility and promote diversity.
* Champion policies and programs that help diversify the healthcare workforce at all points along the career trajectory from pre-K through health professions training and education.
* Ensure the frontline healthcare workforce has access to a thrivable wage and the ability to progress along the health careers ladder.
* Advance comprehensive review of existing policies and gaps to support community health workers in Illinois, including certification and reimbursement.
* Promote policy and practice that supports interdisciplinary healthcare teams and young health professionals’ commitment to health equity.
* Support a robust and adequately funded long-term care workforce, including unpaid caregivers, to support our growing aging population and people with disabilities.

**Thriving & Equitable Communities**

* Promote and advance efforts to build a trauma-informed Chicago and Illinois (see our [trauma-informed policymaking tool](http://hmprg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/policymaking-tool-new.pdf)).
* Contribute to public health planning, like Healthy Chicago 2025, leading the sector to adopt root cause analysis and both anti-racist and broader equity-oriented planning and policy.
* Advance policies and public narrative around harm reduction and public health approaches to preventing overdose from opioids and other drugs, including safe consumption sites, defelonization, and an improved Good Samaritan law.
* Engage City leaders to commit to making Chicago a Livable City for seniors, people with disabilities, and thereby for all Chicagoans.
* Advance equitable housing policy including proactive rental inspections to protect residents from health hazards, lifting the ban on rent control, and just-cause eviction policies.
* Engage in efforts to ensure reproductive rights, safeguard maternal child health, and diversify birthing options—like freestanding birth centers—in Illinois.
* Advance the Chicago HEAL Initiative (Hospital Engagement, Action, and Leadership) to enhance hospitals’ role in violence prevention through workforce development, creating economic opportunities in the neighborhoods these hospitals serve, and healing trauma.
* Support a public health approach to violence prevention by advocating for police accountability, elimination of gang databases, increased data transparency on school discipline, and community resources that promote wellbeing and safety.
* Champion the health sector’s role in advancing equitable, high-quality, trauma-informed, and fully-funded public education, including the expansion of STEAM programming.
* Support the use of a “health equity in all policies” approach in the development and implementation of public policy and public health improvement plans.