



Science.  
Compassion.  
People Power.

# People's Health Platform

After a year of relentless attacks on the health of Americans from the highest levels of government, Defend Public Health believes it is critical to not just fight back against those attacks, but to articulate a positive vision for what U.S. public health can and should be in the future. In our view, we can't just rebuild what has been broken. We must build something better, more expansive, that truly gives everyone in the U.S. access to what they need for a healthy life.

## Executive Summary

1. **Guarantee healthcare for all.** Immediately restore cuts in programs like Medicaid and move swiftly to create a healthcare system that truly covers everyone without cost getting in the way.
2. **Put science back in public health.** Restore scientific integrity to federal science institutions as well as funding for needed research while putting qualified professionals in charge.
3. **Rebuild public health infrastructure.** Rebuild, expand and reimagine public health infrastructure at all levels, emphasizing improved community engagement and accountability.
4. **Protect and expand access to sexual, reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare.** End political attacks on contraception, abortion, gender-affirming care and other forms of sexual and reproductive health care and protect access to this care.
5. **Combat health inequity.** Act to ensure all have an equal chance at good health, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status, disability, rural residence, LGBTQ+ status, etc., and make sure health programs and research support such efforts.
6. **Make our communities healthier and safer.** Because health isn't just about medicine, implement policies ensuring access to the things required for a healthy life, like access to healthy food, clean air, and safe, sanitary housing.
7. **Save our health by saving our planet.** Recognize the dire threat pollution and climate change pose to life and health and restore and strengthen policies to promote clean air and renewable energy.
8. **Prepare for the next pandemic.** Because we know the next pandemic is coming, rebuild and strengthen the infrastructure to protect us from it.
9. **Rejoin global efforts to protect the public's health.** Because we can't go it alone in an interconnected world, rejoin the WHO and other international organizations and efforts to protect health.
10. **Tax the billionaires to invest in our public health.** Enact a fair tax system that makes the wealthy pay their fair share and get billionaires' money out of politics so that we can finally make the investments we need.

# People's Health Platform

## 1. Guarantee healthcare for all

We must ensure that everyone can get the healthcare they need. This should include immediately reversing cuts made to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, but that is just the beginning. We can begin now to build a national healthcare system that guarantees everyone in the U.S. the care they need, including comprehensive pregnancy and postpartum care for at least one year, evidence-based preventive care, and treatment for mental health and substance use disorder, without cost getting in the way and without the unconscionable burden of medical debt.

## 2. Put science back in public health

Scientific integrity must be restored at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Environmental Protection Agency and other governmental organizations. Funding for life-saving research, including research related to diversity, equity and inclusion, must be restored, and political appointees with no training, experience, or knowledge of public health must be removed, particularly those in leadership roles. Instead, qualified professionals who will ensure access to safe, effective medicines and vaccines and promote their appropriate use must be placed in key roles. Along with these steps, federal officials must combat misinformation instead of promoting it, as the current administration has done.

## 3. Rebuild public health infrastructure

Robust public health practice goes hand-in-hand with public health research. The public health system at the state and local levels must be reimagined and rebuilt with multipronged efforts to increase funding and training opportunities to fill critical workforce gaps that have been created by the current administration's decimation of public health programs. These rebuilt programs must include robust data collection and dissemination systems, real community engagement and greater accountability as essential to these efforts.

## 4. Protect and expand access to sexual, reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare

End political attacks on contraception, abortion, gender-affirming care and other forms of sexual and reproductive health care. The government must act to protect rights, not undercut them, and accelerate progress toward a world characterized by reproductive justice. Legal protections for this care, which is essential to health and wellbeing, must be firmly established.

## 5. Combat health inequity

Everyone in the U.S. should have the chance to survive and thrive. Today in this country, your life expectancy depends on your ZIP code, and systemic discrimination against Black, Indigenous, AANHPI, Latino/a/e/x, and other people of color, those with disabilities, and the LGBTQ+ population

all contribute to substantial differences in health between groups of people. Further, our policies too often overlook the impact of wealth, income, or living in rural areas. This has all led to stark differences across the country in your risk of getting sick and your chance of getting the care you need. We must address structural racism, end political attacks on vital efforts to ensure that all of us, regardless of where we live or what groups we belong to, have the same chance to live a healthy life, and aggressively address these inequities. Problems like this can be fixed, but only if we try. Efforts to fix them are common-sense programs to keep all Americans healthy.

## **6. Make our communities healthier and safer**

Health isn't just medicine; it depends on the state of our communities and access to the basics we need for a healthy life. We must ensure access to safe, sanitary housing, nutritious food, clean water, and safe places to exercise, work and play, and must address gun violence, making these efforts an urgent priority. We should celebrate the contributions our immigrant neighbors make to our communities, protect their health, and end unconstitutional immigration enforcement that endangers families and communities. Instead of lecturing Americans on what they should eat, immediately reverse cuts to programs like SNAP that actually help people to eat a healthy diet and find ways to expand them where needed. Mount a serious effort to eliminate "food deserts," where little or no fresh food is currently available. Reverse recent cuts to EPA water pollution protections and ensure access to clean water. Support common-sense measures to reduce gun violence, which is the number one cause of death for U.S. children, such as laws requiring secure storage of firearms, closing loopholes for background checks for firearms sales, and reducing or eliminating the sale of weapons with large-capacity magazines.

## **7. Save our health by saving our planet**

Climate change is an existential threat to all of us, and threatens our health in many different ways. Renew and increase efforts to reduce climate change, which has already begun to impact our lives and health. Pass legislation to restore the EPA endangerment finding and strengthen air pollution standards. Reverse the cuts and attacks on federal agencies that are working to protect our environment and double down on investments in clean energy and in programs to encourage use of clean cars and appliances.

## **8. Prepare for the next pandemic**

The next pandemic is coming, and the infrastructure to protect us against it has been decimated in the U.S. We need to restore and strengthen these programs at our research and public health agencies. This includes removing the needless restrictions that strangle U.S. research on pandemic pathogens and vaccine development. Fund urgently-needed research and disease monitoring so that we're ready for the next viruses or bacteria that threaten us.

## **9. Rejoin global efforts to protect the public's health**

The U.S. has left the World Health Organization and other international health bodies, which means we're trying to go it alone against global health threats. It just won't work, because viruses and bacteria don't care about borders. Recognize that we can never be safe from preventable disease if the rest of the world isn't safe and act accordingly: Rejoin the WHO and other worldwide organizations and efforts that protect lives and health and restore funding for global health programs under USAID. Restore foreign assistance that, before recent cuts, saved the lives and health of millions around the world. Establish a U.S. Department of Global Health Equity to strengthen our work with other nations and international organizations.

## **10. Tax the billionaires to invest in our public health**

Economic exploitation and extraction have robbed the public sector, making our public health and health systems weaker, making us sick, and putting oligarchs in charge of our nation's priorities. It's time to fix this. We can make the investments we need by addressing our unfair tax system and focusing on policies proven to advance health. We can tax the rich, fairly tax capital gains, change the tax code to make sure corporations pay their fair share, cancel student debt, get private equity firms out of our hospitals, and most importantly get billionaires and their money out of politics. We can accomplish all of what we need to do if we confront those stripping our nation for parts and profit.

*Defend Public Health is a volunteer-driven network of public health researchers, healthcare workers, advocates and allies fighting to protect the health of all from the Trump administration's cruel attacks on proven, science-based public health policies. We believe that everyone has the right to what they need for a healthy life, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity.*

[DefendPublicHealth.org](https://DefendPublicHealth.org)