

## Why should I care?

In 2012, the then-Institute of Medicine reported that “the current generation of children and young adults in the United States could become the first generation to experience shorter life spans and fewer healthy years of life than those of their parents.”<sup>1</sup> And data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that in 2016, American life expectancy decreased for the second year in a row.<sup>2</sup>

We can and must do better. To live up to our nation’s health potential, there are three important system changes we must address.

**More Americans need health insurance.** The Affordable Care Act has brought health insurance to an additional 20 million Americans.<sup>3</sup> That’s amazing progress. Yet as of 2016, more than 28 million people remained uninsured.<sup>4</sup>

**The U.S. must invest more in health and prevention.** Eighty-six percent of our nation’s health care expenditures are related to often-preventable chronic and mental health conditions.<sup>5</sup> Still, less than 3 percent of our health care spending is focused on prevention through public health.<sup>6</sup> Prevention investments are more than a smart use of taxpayer dollars — they can also save lives. Every 10 percent increase in funding for community-based health programs is estimated to reduce deaths due to preventable causes by up to 7 percent.<sup>7</sup>

**Health disparities exist among numerous populations.** Health inequities related to income and access to coverage exist across demographic lines, but population-based disparities are impossible to deny as well. For example, in 2015, the infant mortality rate for black babies was more than twice the rate for white babies, at 11.7 deaths per 1,000 births among black infants versus 4.8 deaths per 1,000 births among white infants<sup>8</sup>.

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1 APHA: The Prevention and Public Health Fund Issue Brief, June 2012

2 National Center for Health Statistics: [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db293.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db293.pdf)

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 2016: [www.hhs.gov/about/news/2016/03/03/20-million-people-have-gained-health-insurance-coverage-because-affordable-care-act-new-estimates](http://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2016/03/03/20-million-people-have-gained-health-insurance-coverage-because-affordable-care-act-new-estimates)

4 U.S. Census Bureau: [www.census.gov/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-260.html](http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-260.html)

5 CDC: [www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm)

6 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. National Health Expenditure Data: [www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NHE-Fact-Sheet.html](http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NHE-Fact-Sheet.html)

7 Health Affairs, Evidence Links Increase in Public Health Spending to Declines in Preventable Deaths, August 2011.: <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/8/1585.full.pdf+html>

8 JAMA Pediatrics: <https://media.jamanetwork.com/news-item/differences-u-s-infant-mortality-rates-among-black-white-babies/>

## What can I do?

Multiple attempts have been made to repeal the Affordable Care Act and its Prevention and Public Health Fund — and those attempts will likely continue. Repealing the law would mean turning back the progress we have made to insure millions of Americans and refocus on prevention and health. **To keep the health of America moving in the right direction, you can take action right now to:**

1. [Tell Congress to support and continue to implement the Affordable Care Act](#) and urge your state lawmakers to either sustain or authorize Medicaid expansions for low-income adults. If the Affordable Care Act helped you or your family access needed care and preventive services, share your story with lawmakers or consider sending a letter-to-the-editor to your local newspaper. Personal stories from real people are powerful advocacy tools.
2. [Tell Congress to fully fund the Prevention and Public Health Fund](#) so we can continue changing our health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy.
3. [Visit APHA's Health Reform page](#) to stay abreast of challenges that threaten to undo much of the progress embodied in the Affordable Care Act.



The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the profession of public health, promote best practices and share the latest public health research and information. We are the only organization that influences federal policy, has a 140-plus year perspective and brings together members from all fields of public health.

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