

Why should I care?

Poverty and poor health go hand-in-hand. One study¹ found a life expectancy gap of *more than 10 years* between the richest 1 percent of Americans and the poorest 1 percent, with that gap increasing over time. Here is a snapshot of how poor Americans' health suffers more than that of wealthier Americans:

| CDC, Health, United States, 2016 ² | Living at 400% or more of poverty | Living below 100% of poverty |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| No usual source of health care, adults ages 18-64 | 9.9% | 27.3% |
| Have had colorectal tests or procedures, adults ages 50-75 | 70% | 45.6% |
| Adults ages 18 and older with 2-3 chronic conditions | 16.6% | 23.3% |
| Serious psychological distress in prior 30 days, adults 18 and older | 1.3% | 8.3% |
| Disability measures among adult ages 18 and older | 22.1% | 42.8% |

We must close the income inequality gap in our country to help close the health gaps that our poorest neighbors are enduring from coast to coast. We can do this in a variety of policy ways that work together:

What can I do?

Support raising the minimum wage for U.S. workers and families. If Congress raised the federal minimum hourly wage to \$10.10, 25 million U.S. workers would benefit and 5 million to 6 million Americans would be lifted out of poverty.³ By making a livable wage, these Americans could afford better health care, healthier food options and safer living conditions for their families. Also, higher wages have been linked to fewer premature deaths⁴ and reduced infant mortality.⁵

Speak up on behalf of safety net programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that help millions of American families make ends meet, put food on the table and climb out of poverty. Social issues like poverty, education and housing are closely intertwined with access to health care and have a direct effect on health. However, the U.S. spends less on our social safety net programs than other countries — all of whom experience longer life expectancy than we do.⁶

¹ The Association Between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001-2014. JAMA: <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2513561>

² CDC, Health, United States, 2016: www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/contents2016.htm#poverty

³ Oxfam America, Working Poor in America: www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Working-Poor-in-America-report-Oxfam-America.pdf

⁴ American Journal of Public Health: <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303188>

⁵ American Journal of Public Health: <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdfplus/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303268>

⁶ The Commonwealth Fund: Issues in International Health Policy: www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2015/oct/us-health-care-from-a-global-perspective

Tell Congress to support paid sick leave and family leave. Not allowing workers to take time off when they're sick can have serious consequences for public health, including the spread of disease. Workers without paid sick leave are faced with a difficult decision every time they or a loved one are sick – stay home to recover or care for a sick child or go to work because they cannot afford a smaller paycheck. Today, more than 37 million⁷ private-sector U.S. workers have no access to a single day of paid sick leave, forcing them to compromise their health and the health of their communities. This is despite the fact that researchers have found⁸ paid sick leave ordinances have little to no effect on business.

[Take action HERE](#) if you agree that it's time to move forward with a national law to ensure all working people in the U.S. can earn paid sick days. The federal Healthy Families Act would give workers more flexibility in taking care of themselves and their families.

⁷ National Partnership for Women and Families: www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/busting-the-myths-about-paid-sick-days.pdf

⁸ Center for Economic and Policy Research: <http://cepr.net/publications/reports/no-big-deal-the-impact-of-new-york-city-s-paid-sick-days-law-on-employers>



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