

## Furthering Prevention & Equity

Prevention Institute has a 20-year history of promoting *quality* primary prevention—the skills and approaches to prevent people from getting sick or injured in the first place. In the aftermath of the 2016 election, we have immersed ourselves in assessing the path forward for prevention and equity.

Navigating the current political reality calls for greater tenacity, flexibility, and audacity in what we do and how we do it:

- **Tenacity** to protect the advances in prevention and equity we've made so far, and to insist on sustaining our commitment to science and equity
- **Flexibility** to navigate current circumstances in a way that balances immediate concerns with long-term vision and effectiveness
- **Audacity** to keep pushing forward to address unmet needs and to seek opportunities to apply prevention skills and knowledge in order to make a lasting difference in communities

Navigating the current political climate will require us to clarify and redouble our focus on equity and safeguarding equitable opportunity—particularly for those communities that have long faced discrimination based on race, gender identity, sexuality, income, disability, age, religion, and immigration status, and the urban, rural, and tribal communities that have too often been left out of the picture. Our current political moment calls for vigilance, outspokenness, and joint action in the face of persistent health inequities and preventable human misery and suffering.

While the political landscape has shifted significantly, strategies that advance community health, equity, and safety can, and will, flourish—but only if we insist that they must. As we work alongside our local, state, national, and federal partners, Prevention Institute will:

### **Assert the overarching benefits of prevention—that health matters and prevention is critical to health:**

- **Prevention works and we must elevate prevention successes.** From traffic safety to tobacco control, we know what to do to reduce the likelihood of illness and injury. We need to draw upon the extensive evidence base of effective community-based strategies and policies to emphasize prevention know-how and effective outcomes.
- **Prevention saves money and produces financial benefits to multiple sectors of society.** Investing in proven strategies to keep people safe and healthy in the first place is far more cost-effective than treating illnesses and injuries once they occur. Additionally, when people are healthy and safe, they can actively engage in work and school, their workplaces thrive, and they are more empowered to contribute to the betterment of their communities. Taxes, fees, and savings that emerge from prevention efforts should be captured and re-invested in further prevention efforts.

- **Prevention greatly reduces unnecessary demand, and cost, to the health care system.** Current predictions have health care costs soaring as high as 20% – eating up one in every five dollars – of the US gross domestic product. By establishing the Prevention and Public Health Fund and funding its implementation in 2010, before the rest of the law took effect, the Affordable Care Act affirmed that substantial investments in prevention are at the heart of efforts to reduce demands on our healthcare system, save lives, reduce suffering, and lower healthcare costs.
- **Prevention solves multiple problems.** By changing the community conditions that impact overall health, safety and equity, comprehensive prevention efforts effectively address a range of community needs at once. Efforts to expand access to active transportation, for example, can help people lead more healthy, active lives, strengthen community cohesion, enhance the local economy, and even curb greenhouse gas emissions by helping people downshift from driving to bicycling or walking.
- **Prevention must play a primary role in our overall health strategy, alongside healthcare coverage for all and quality medical treatment.**

#### Advance health equity:

- **Prevention is grounded in the demand for greater health equity and in the values of fairness and social justice.** Inequities in health are preventable – by definition and when inequities exist, that means people suffer unnecessarily. No one should get sick or injured when we know what to do to prevent illness and injury. And nobody should experience the prospect of even greater, illness, injury and trauma because they face systematic discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, income, age, disability, religion, and immigration status. Rural, tribal, urban, and suburban communities each face their own challenges, which must be addressed to attain health equity for all residents.
- **Efforts should ensure that equity gains are maintained and strengthened and that policy and regulatory actions that are harmful to equity are staunchly opposed.**
- **The perpetuation of inequities generates trauma and fear for individuals and entire communities, directly damaging health and wellbeing.** In addition to the direct effects of discrimination, the fear of further discrimination also deepens and entrenches trauma at the individual and community levels. Understanding and responding to the manifestation of trauma becomes ever more important at a time of political uncertainty.
- **Now is the time to intensify our efforts to advance equity and oppose attempts to turn the health, safety and equity of communities into politically divisive wedge issues.** Health is a nonpartisan issue that affects everyone.

#### Amplify prevention victories at the local and state level:

- **Support local and state leadership to design and implement innovative prevention and equity solutions in every locale.** Under the constraints of the federal climate, local- and state-level efforts become ever more important. Tools, methodologies, skills, resources, and examples must be provided to enable communities and states to tailor efforts for local

success. Effective strategies must be shared and leveraged to ensure that communities with diverse needs can learn from one another.

- **Disseminate local and state successes and ensure elected officials know about them.** Building greater accountability for prevention and equity outcomes means we must make prevention and equity work highly visible by clearly and regularly describing the work underway and emphasizing its overall value, including its impacts, outcomes, applicability, versatility, as well as underlining the consequences of eliminating these efforts.
- **Leverage policies and infrastructure investments at the local level to set aside resources for communities in need and with public health “win-wins.”** For example, parks and open space bonds could include dedicated funds for high-need communities; transportation measures could include funds for anti-displacement efforts and active transportation infrastructure, such as bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks.
- **Prevention brings jobs for local residents, enhances local economies, and helps workplaces thrive.**
- **Working across sectors maximizes the potential co-benefits of prevention.** Multi-sector efforts are now more important than ever. As the understanding of the community and social determinants of health increases, so do the opportunities to leverage the skills and expertise of diverse sectors—from housing and transportation to parks and economic development—to build strategic alliances and find common cause to benefit health and wellbeing.

#### Reclaim the narrative:

- **Prevention and equity transcend politics.** Prevention efforts have succeeded at the local, state, and national levels under both Republican and Democratic leadership because everyone, regardless of political affiliation, wants to avoid illness and injury in the first place.
- **Prevention is grounded in shared values.** In a deeply divisive political climate, it is important that we not abandon the shared values that ground prevention and equity work—including health, fairness, opportunity, ingenuity, dignity, and respect.
- **Emphasize prevention’s common sense and financial sense.**
- **Prevention is a key element of a thriving healthcare system, and everyone’s health depends on it.**
- **Prevention is necessary for strong jobs, thriving workplaces, and a strong economy.** Investing in prevention means investing in a productive, healthy workforce for cities, counties, states, and the nation. Cutting prevention means cutting economic growth.
- **We will not be silent and will amplify community voices calling for health and equity.** Reinvigorated and emboldened community activism can serve as an opportunity to build the long-term movement for prevention and equity, and amplify the collective voice that insists on a greater vision for health, well-being, dignity, and respect.