

Highlights From the 2020-2021 California Legislative Session

October 20, 2021

On October 10th, Governor Newsom signed or vetoed every bill that successfully passed through the Legislature and made it onto the Governor's desk. In a year defined by bold commitments to a comprehensive recovery from the pandemic, including Governor Newsom's \$100 Billion California Comeback Plan, the Legislature took equally bold steps towards advancing health equity and racial justice in California. Among these steps includes the passage of the California Youth Empowerment Act, which creates a Youth Commission within state government to empower youth voices; and the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (C.R.I.S.E.S.) Act, which creates a pilot program for community-led alternatives to crises and emergency response. These victories for youth empowerment and community safety would not have been possible without the dedicated work of advocates from across California who pushed legislators to champion racial equity and justice.

But the work does not stop here, while advocates saw big wins, they also experienced significant setbacks on critical supports for determinants of health like housing, food access, and paid family leave. Below we have included a list of priority bills we have been tracking in this legislative session and have noted if they have been signed, vetoed, or held in committee. We look forward to continue organizing with advocates and communities during the next legislative session to advance health equity and racial justice in California.

FINANCING FOR A PREVENTION-ORIENTED HEALTH SYSTEM			
AB 1038	Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund	Establishes the California Health Equity Program, a competitive grant program for CBOs, community clinics, local health departments, and tribal organizations to take actions related to health equity.	Held in Appropriations, 2-year bill ¹
AB 1163	End preemption on local taxes for sugary drinks	Would end a prohibition on local control over taxes on sugary drinks. Strong opposition from soda companies.	Held in Revenue & Taxes ²
SB 56 / AB 4	Health4All	SB 56 expands Medi-Cal access to adults 50+ regardless of immigration status, while AB 4 expands access for older adults 65+.	Both held in Appropriations ³
SB 65	Momnibus Act	Creates seven strategies to close the racial and socioeconomic maternal health disparities gap, including improving research and data collection on racial and socio-economic factors that contribute to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality in communities of color.	Signed into law

¹ The 2021-22 State Budget commits to funding for the Fund, but advocates will continue engaging state leaders to ensure this funding is secured.

² In [a win for public health advocates](#), on October 1, a court ruled that the provision in the Keep Groceries Affordable Act of 2018 that penalizes cities for enacting lawful soda taxes was unconstitutional.

³ The State Budget includes \$67.3 million to expand Medi-Cal Coverage to undocumented adults age 50 and older.

HOUSING, LAND USE, AND PARKS			
AB 30	Access to nature is a human right	Declares that it is a policy of the state that access to nature is a human right.	Held in Appropriations, 2-year bill
AB 71	Bring California Home Act	Provides ongoing funding source for affordable housing development and Continuums of Care via a corporate tax.	Ordered to inactive file by Author, 2-year bill
AB 721	Exclusionary Housing Covenants	Bans housing density restrictions in neighborhoods with private restrictive covenants in order to promote more affordable housing development.	Signed into law
SB 624	Environmental Equity & Outdoor Access Act	Commits state to ensuring all of CA can benefit from and have access to nature. Also promotes cultural competency and diversity in staff.	Held in Appropriations, 2-year bill
PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA			
AB 118	Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act	Creates a pilot grant program to invest in and promote police-free and community-based responses to local emergencies, including public health crises, mental health crises, intimate partner violence, natural disasters, and community violence.	Signed into Law ⁴
AB 123	Paid Family Leave	Increases the paid family leave (PFL) wage replacement rate to 75%.	Vetoed, 2-year bill
AB 1041	Chosen Family Paid Leave	Expands PFL protections to people related by affinity, strong opposition from the California Chamber of Commerce.	Ordered to inactive file, 2-year bill
SB 464	Food for All	Expands the California Food Assistance Program to undocumented immigrants.	Held in Appropriations, 2-year bill ⁵
SB 493	Promoting Youth Success and Empowerment (PROMYSE) Act	Requires 95% of Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funds be invested in non-law enforcement public agencies & CBOs.	Held in Appropriations, 2-year bill
EMBEDDING EQUITY INTO STATE GOVERNMENT			
AB 46	California Youth Empowerment Act	Creates the California Youth Commission, a 13-member advisory commission made up of youth ages 13-25. The commission can advise on pending legislation and draft model legislation and resolutions.	Signed into law
SB 17	Office of Racial Equity	Establishes an autonomous Office of Racial Equity that would, among other duties, analyze outcomes data to identify racial and ethnic disparities and facilitate a racial equity planning process for all state departments.	Ordered to inactive file by Author, 2-year bill

⁴ The State Budget includes \$10 million for the CRISES pilot program.

⁵ The State Budget expands the California Food Assistance Program to undocumented immigrants, with targeted enrollment beginning in 2023.