

# Health Care for All West Virginia



## Health Care Vision and Legislative Agenda



The West Virginia Health Care for All Coalition, made up of statewide advocacy groups, grassroots organizations, and community members, advances our vision and advocates to ensure that all West Virginians have access to health care that is equitable, comprehensive, affordable, non-judgmental, and high-quality.

Since its emergence in West Virginia, COVID-19 created serious health challenges that local, state, and federal officials worked quickly to address, showing the importance of government response to health and economic crises. But the COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed longstanding gaps in our health care system that must be addressed. And it has magnified the deep impacts of longstanding racial inequities in access to care and treatment, which directly led to disproportionate tolls of the pandemic on Black and brown communities in our state and across the country.

Every West Virginian deserves healthcare that includes a complete set of evidenced-based services including preventative services, maternal and child health services, chronic health management, end-of-life services, mental health services, substance use disorder (SUD) interventions, and comprehensive behavioral health services and treatment, including support of vulnerable people with chronic behavioral health issues.

Investments in healthcare do not only impact health; they have wide-ranging impacts on families' economic well-being as well as the state's economy. People must be healthy to be fully engaged members of their communities, families, and workplaces. Children's performance in school and their long-term life success improves when they can receive all needed health care. Thus, this agenda is broader than just healthcare - it is key to moving our state forward.

Ultimately, our coalition shares a vision with many allies across our state and country of a universal health system that delivers comprehensive healthcare equitably to every person in this country. We also embrace a vision of our nation shifting away from a profit-driven health system to one that clearly focuses on positive individual and public health outcomes.

## Our policy vision includes:

- Protecting the state's budget and fully funding Medicaid, the health insurer for one-third of West Virginians and a critical revenue of our state's economy.
- Building on current healthcare benefits and rejecting efforts to reduce investments in healthcare, Medicaid access, or services covered.
- Ensuring that every West Virginian can enroll in affordable, quality health insurance regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, or job status.
- Improving overall coverage and affordability of all types of health insurance that cover West Virginians. Coverage must be comprehensive and without arbitrary limits on amount, duration, or scope, and providers must be adequately reimbursed for their services.
- Advancing health equity for all West Virginians to overcome longstanding racial, economic, and gender inequities in our health system by prioritizing the needs of those who have been underserved.
- Increasing access to mental health care services and supports for West Virginia students and families.
- Ensuring that all women have access to affordable, quality health services, including a full range of reproductive, prenatal, and maternal health services; and
- Recognition that non-medical factors, poverty, and the social determinants of health (including affordable healthy foods, safe housing, reliable transportation, and clean air and water) are intersectional with the health and overall well-being of West Virginia families.

## Our coalition will specifically prioritize and advocate for these goals:

- Addressing racial disparities in health access and outcomes by creating a Minority Health Advisory Team with leadership from Black and brown communities.
- Increasing the number of West Virginians covered and addressing the Medicaid “cliff effect” by creating a Medicaid Buy-in, a more affordable health insurance option to ensure continuity of coverage for working West Virginians who reach the “Medicaid cliff” and see their incomes slightly exceed current Medicaid eligibility levels.
- Investing in public health by restoring lost funding to county health departments and prioritizing their budgets going forward, as well as increasing funding for community health initiatives and programs designed to prevent health issues associated with obesity (diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and more).
- Protecting West Virginians from having their financial security destroyed due to medical debt by codifying a uniform set of protections from medical debt and collection.
- Addressing the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs and medical supplies by protecting West Virginians from unfair and unjustified prices and price increases, including but not limited to insulin, other diabetes-related drugs, and diabetes-related medical supplies.
- Prioritizing mental health by re-establishing a system of home- and community-based care for vulnerable people with chronic mental illness with ongoing case management and support services and requiring all health insurance plans to cover an annual 60-minute mental health check-up.
- Expanding mental health services for children in our schools and in other community settings by increasing funding for models that have been shown to effectively reach and help children develop.
- Advancing evidence-based Substance Use Disorder (SUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery services for all West Virginians through expanded levels of funding and without arbitrary restrictions on programs supported by peer-reviewed expert research, including harm-reduction programs.
- Passing pro-family and worker policies that protect health and well-being including paid sick days and paid family and medical leave for all workers.
- Addressing the maternal and infant mortality crisis by increasing funding for expanded home visiting programs, making doula care a covered Medicaid benefit, and providing expanded maternal access to mental health services.
- Expanding the Medicaid dental benefit by raising the cap on annual covered services. West Virginia is ranked at the bottom among the 50 states on oral health indicators. 45 percent of older adults have not seen a dentist in over a year and 26 percent will lose all of their natural teeth.
- Making vision care a covered benefit under Medicaid including eye exams, glasses, and contacts.

**The Health Care for All WV Coalition welcomes all.  
To get involved in any of these issues or to let us know what you see  
as health-related needs in your communities or networks.**

Through a grant from the CareQuest Foundation and Arnold Ventures, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, West Virginia Citizens Action Fund, the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy and other organizations work together to advance the goals of the West Virginia Health Agenda -- an outline of positive policies that could address access to affordable health care for all West Virginians. We have met goals from previous agendas by working to pass bills that capped co-pays for all West Virginians, added dental benefits for adults with Medicaid and extended postpartum coverage from only 2 months to 12 months.

We are a grassroots and public information campaign, our goal is to educate and build power, that means we can't do it alone. We need your help.

Please contact your local coordinators and take action with us.



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## Call for West Virginia Health Care Storytellers!

### Join the Movement, Share your Story!

In the fight to secure quality, affordable Health Care for All, stories are our most powerful policy weapon. Stories help us to identify health care needs unique to our region and communicate data in an accessible, humanized way. Your lived experiences have the potential to destigmatize tough issues and shape policy from the ground up. Our elected leaders need to hear from West Virginians like YOU:

- Currently or formally enrolled in West Virginia Medicaid or CHIP
- Making too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford other health insurance
- Paying too much for prescription medication and doctors visits
- Recovering from Substance Use Disorder
- Uninsured and unable to afford health care
- Lost Medicaid coverage due to a change in income
- ACA / Health Care Marketplace insurance enrollee
- Health care providers with unique insight on the needs of your community

Your voice can make a difference. Tell us about how access and cost of health care in West Virginia impacts you and your family. Contact Mariah Plante at [mariah@wvahc.org](mailto:mariah@wvahc.org) or (304) 951-0285 to take the first step on your advocacy journey.