



Budget Bite

Breaking down barriers to health

Health Equity Network of Ohio



Poverty is bad for health. So is racism.

All Ohioans deserve to live happy, healthy lives. However, a number of existing policies result in too many Ohioans working low-paying jobs with few benefits and residing in under-resourced and polluted communities. In turn, these Ohioans often experience toxic levels of chronic stress that make them more susceptible to disease and poor health. This is particularly true for Black Ohioans. Black Ohioans are three times as likely to live in poverty as white Ohioans, and more likely to live in segregated areas of concentrated poverty, in part due to redlining.

Systemic racism—often encoded into policies, exercised in regular practices, and experienced everywhere from the doctor’s office and grocery store to job interviews—further compounds toxic stress levels experienced in Black communities. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on Black Ohioans. In response, Gov. DeWine’s administration released the [Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint](#) and [A Plan of Action to Advance Equity](#). These plans go beyond health care and embrace a holistic approach to well-being. By addressing the impact of social, economic, and physical environments, the strike force focused attention on some of the “causes of the causes” of Ohio’s health divide between Black and white Ohioans.

A holistic approach to building healthy communities

The Health Equity Network’s 2022-2023 Biennial Budget Recommendations

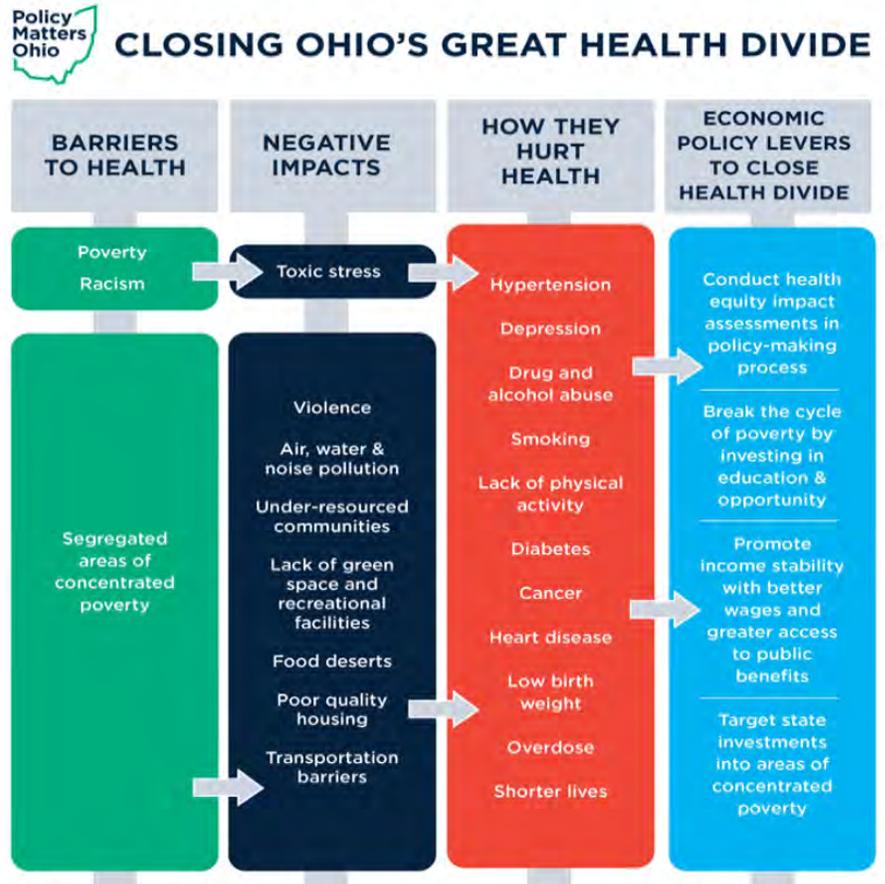
Recommendation	State budget cost	Benefit
Require and enable the Ohio Legislative Service Commission to provide “health notes”*	\$1 million annually	Going forward, we can better understand the impacts of public policy on health and make more informed decisions.
Build a public health and equity database	\$1 million for database set up; \$2 million annually to operate	Publicly available data is critical/core component to efforts to successfully address health inequities. Ohio currently falls short.
Fund a statewide 2-1-1 network	\$540,000 annually	Ohio’s 2-1-1 system helps connect people to the services they need, a critical service the need for which increased dramatically during COVID.
Recognize Racism is a Problem	\$0	Recognizing racism as a public health crisis is an essential first step towards repairing damage from centuries of systemic racism.

* Health notes, similar to fiscal notes already undertaken by the Legislative Service Commission, would provide a high-level health and equity impact assessment of proposed legislation in order to inform legislators of the health and equity impacts of that legislation prior to passing it into law.

Recommendations

The Health Equity Network of Ohio is encouraged by the holistic approach the DeWine administration's Blueprint and Executive Response takes to begin breaking down barriers to health faced by Black and brown Ohioans. Ohio's 2022-23 Budget gives lawmakers the opportunity to support that work.

- 1. Require and fund the Ohio Legislative Service Commission to undertake "health notes."** The Ohio Minority Health Strike Force recommends the Ohio Statehouse "apply a health equity lens" to the policy-making process. The Health Equity Network of Ohio worked with the Ohio Public Health Association to develop an analytical tool for use by the Ohio Legislative Service Commission. This tool would enable Ohio legislators to consider the likelihood, severity, magnitude and distribution of impacts on the social determinants of health from proposed legislation.
- 2. Build a public health and equity database.** The Minority Health Strike Force blueprint called for data collection and analysis to monitor progress on its recommendations. Lawmakers must provide the needed funding.



- 3. Fund a statewide 211 network.** Every Ohioan deserves to live in a county with a well-supported, 24-7 211 system that connects them to important services and has a regularly maintained, searchable resource database. During the pandemic, calls to the 211 network increased by 33%. Demand for services such as food assistance has gone up by 43%. Prior to 2020, only two-thirds of Ohioans had 211 operating in their communities. During the pandemic, service was extended to the remaining 34 counties. Going forward, securing state support to maintain a statewide 211 network is critical.
- 4. Pass the resolution recognizing racism as a public health crisis, as proposed during the last General Assembly.** The number one recommendation from the Minority Health Strike Force is to "acknowledge racism as a public health crisis and commit to swift action to dismantle racism." Recognizing that the poor health and early death of Black Ohioans is directly linked to a long history of past and present institutional (and individual) racism is the first step toward repairing the harm.

This Budget Bite was produced in partnership with Health Equity Network of Ohio ("HEN of Ohio"). The network was established in 2019 in support of organizations across the state that advance health equity.