

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



## Webinar Focus

The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted a town hall style webinar, *Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow* on November 19, 2024. Panelists discussed ways to overcome threats to health equity, emphasizing the importance and need for continued action against such threats. This report provides a synthesis of key takeaways, solutions, and action steps identified from the webinar.

## Webinar Voices

- › **Caryn Bell**, Associate Director, P4HE, [Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine, Tulane University](#)
- › **Dr. Chris Pernell**, Director, [Center for Health Equity, NAACP](#)
- › **Dr. Angela Chalk**, Founder and Executive Director, [Healthy Community Services](#)
- › **Sinsi Hernandez-Cancio**, Vice President, [National Partnership for Women & Families](#)
- › **Alma C. Stewart Allen**, Founder and President, [Louisiana Center for Health Equity \(LCHE\)](#)

## Key Resources

- [Community-Led Initiatives](#)
- [Lessons Learned for Movement Building](#)
- [Policymaking Across Sectors](#)
- [What's Next for Health Equity After the Election](#)

## Your Voice

P4HE values collaboration. If there is a resource on this topic that you would like to share with us, provide it [here](#).

## Key Takeaways

Today, and as we look to the future, numerous concepts, beliefs, practices, policies, and systems pose threats to health equity. To raise awareness of the most pressing issues for health equity and to ideate on solutions, the P4HE Collaborative hosted a town hall style webinar to uplift attendees' questions on the current and future threats to health equity and the actions needed to overcome them. The discussion revealed the importance of community wisdom, cross-sector collaborations, navigating the current system, and political engagement to combat threats to health equity.



Through a mentimeter poll conducted during the webinar, attendees indicated a range of feelings in the current climate, including motivated, scared, hopeful, and stressed. Attendees also noted the things they need to continue their health equity work, including **funding, community, support and advocacy from leadership, collaboration, collective action and movement building, connection, and structural change.**

## Call To Action



*"Don't give up, don't lie down. Don't be discouraged. In fact, this should be more motivating and encourage you. This is a call to action. Get up, show up, stand up, speak up. Do your part and we will see progress even within this current environment."* Alma C. Stewart Allen, Founder and President, Louisiana Center for Health Equity (LCHE)

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



Below, we've summarized immediate action steps shared by the panelists and identified by webinar participants to be taken to advance health equity.

## > Rely on and uplift community wisdom and community-led initiatives to combat threats to health equity.



*"It is going to be incumbent upon those of us in communities who are doing work now more than ever to make sure that their needs of communities are met. We're going to have to go back and continue to rely on that community wisdom."* Dr. Angela Chalk, Founder and Executive

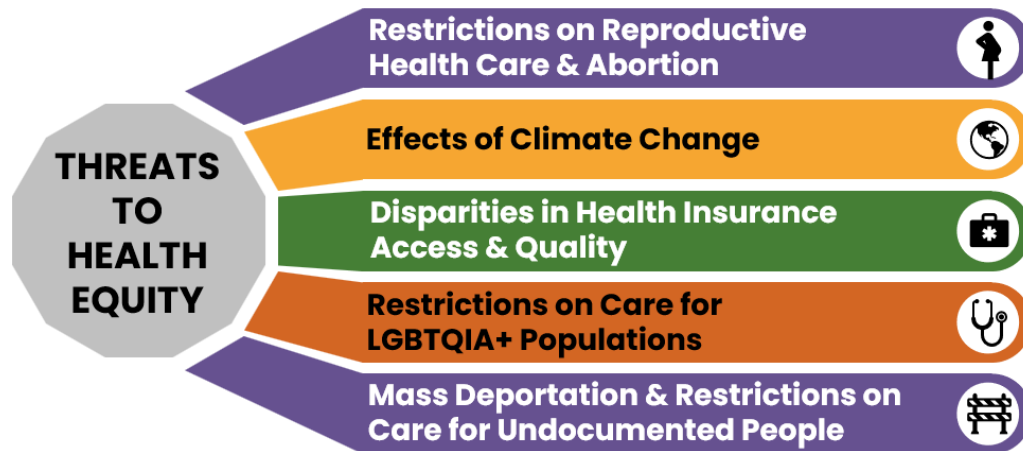
Director, Healthy Community Services

Communities are rich with wisdom, [lived experience](#), and [resilience](#) in confronting systemic barriers that threaten the right to a healthy life, particularly among historically marginalized groups, including Black, Brown, low-income, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, and disabled populations. Given the long history of structural racism, discrimination, and oppression in the United States, which has often blatantly disregarded the health of these groups, communities must rely on the teachings and [wisdom of their elders](#), who have repeatedly faced and overcome such threats. Members of communities should lean on each other to learn how to advocate for themselves and to [develop and implement initiatives](#) that will impact determinants of health and truly improve their health outcomes. Individuals and organizations from across sectors must amplify the voices and efforts of communities, showing solidarity in fighting alongside them in the pursuit of health equity. Such [cross-sector collaborations](#) can contribute to increased advocacy, improved service delivery, expanded health programs and protections, improved determinants of health, and positive policy creation and change – all while positioning communities as the leaders in these endeavors. In the face of glaring threats to health equity, reconnecting to and leveraging community wisdom while also uplifting community-led initiatives through widespread partnerships will serve as a foundation to make systemic change that centers the needs of communities. As Dr. Angela Chalk said, *"it takes a community to be a community."*

For more on overcoming specific threats to health equity, check out the P4HE Collaborative blogs on:

- [Climate Change](#)
- [Predictive Technologies](#)
- [Health Insurance Access](#)
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



› **Collaborate across movements and sectors to garner unity and momentum against threats to health equity.**



*“We need to be fighting for health equity across all movements because unity is one of the things that is going to give us the momentum and power we need.”* Sinsi Hernandez-Cancio, Vice President, National Partnership for Women & Families

Increased threats to health equity can create a sense of [hopelessness](#) and isolation, particularly for those attempting to address these challenges. This is especially true when such threats aim to [foster division](#) among groups. Those enforcing harmful policies and practices, often those in positions of power and privilege, rely on feelings of despair to maintain their status in society and continue the oppression and dehumanization of groups they consider subordinate. Although this has been a continued pattern, rooted in white supremacy, throughout history and in present day, the status quo has been challenged when groups come together. Threats to health equity, such as proposed restrictions on [abortion](#), [contraceptive care](#), [services and insurance for undocumented people](#), and gender-affirming care, require unity between affected and unaffected populations. Recognize adversaries' attempts to divide movements and use that as motivation for further coalition building and unity. To start, be proactive, intentional, and persistent in [reaching out to people with lived experience](#) with certain health issues and to organizations seeking to serve them in order to gain a greater understanding of the health inequities and where support is needed. Consider the [intersectionality](#) of individuals who are disproportionately harmed by several compounding threats to their health and how collaborations across issue areas can best meet these diverse needs. With health under attack at every angle, there must be [cross-movement coordination](#)

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



in order to effectively [strategize and build](#) both individual and collective movements. People and organizations across sectors, especially those in higher positions in society, need to participate in these collaboratives and contribute to their resources and positionality to strengthen coalitions against health inequity. By combining the expertise from [health professionals](#), researchers, and [community-based organizations](#); funding and support from [philanthropy organizations](#) and the private sector; and strategies from [grassroots advocates and activists](#), the unity among these partners can help to garner the momentum needed to make and maintain progress. Threats to health equity impact everyone, so it is imperative for groups from different movements and sectors to work together to design and implement far-reaching, sustainable solutions that will combat the many threats to health equity.

For more resources on understanding, navigating, and collaborating on significant health equity topics, check out: [A Call for Continued Collaboration: Health Equity Post Election.](#)

## > **Navigate the current unjust systems and circumstances to make change for health equity.**



*"I would like to encourage everyone to seize the opportunities. We can focus on the negatives and the doom and gloom or we can focus on the realities of what we have and the way it is. And, we can make the adjustment on our end to navigate this current environment to still*

*have some gains and make progress even within this environment."* Alma

C. Stewart Allen, Founder and President, Louisiana Center for Health Equity (LCHE)

Although the threats to health equity may seem insurmountable, it is important to not lose hope that change is possible. The attacks on the well-being of historically marginalized groups are not new as each era of the nation's history has brought an onslaught of [oppressive and discriminatory policies and ideology](#) that have negatively impacted both determinants of health and health outcomes. And yet, people have always fought back against these regressions despite structural barriers and even [achieved advancements](#) in protecting and expanding their right to a healthy life. The current circumstances are no different; it is necessary to figure out how to navigate them. The first step is to reframe and redefine public health as something that involves and shapes everything and everyone, which is undeniable truth no matter how proposed harmful policies undermine this fact. With this in mind, remember that change happens incrementally, so starting with small, local change in communities can add up to more, larger gains at the [state](#) and national level over time. It is essential to focus on the realities of the current systems in place and identify ways to operate within them and points for disruption. Create a vision for how to move forward, attainable goals, and a [strategic action plan](#) for leveraging the knowledge and resources of organizations across sectors and

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



movements. At both community and national levels, examine the narratives and rhetoric regarding certain communities and their effects on access to quality health care and health outcomes. Today, there is no longer just ignorance of the facts surrounding the disproportionately negative effects of policies and systems on marginalized communities but instead a blatant and deliberate denial and misconstruing of these facts. This new dynamic necessitates new and innovative approaches, such as [storytelling](#), to engage with leaders and peers in order to shift the narrative toward valuing all people's health in pursuit of humanity and equity. Despite the seemingly uphill battle, it is important to stay motivated and seize any and all opportunities to disrupt the system to make progress and [maintain momentum](#). People and organizations from various sectors must uplift efforts to navigate the current difficult circumstances and contribute to disrupting the system in their respective fields and in collaborations in order to target all potential avenues for change.



## > Promote political engagement to change the policies that perpetuate health inequity.



*“Why do people vote ‘against’ their interest? Because they don't necessarily understand how the ballot or the vote is directly linked to their health and well-being outcomes, their economic outcomes, their education outcomes. And, we need to help people understand*

*that.”* Dr. Chris Pernell, Director, Center for Health Equity, NAACP

Often, the most threatening attacks on health equity are enforced through harmful policies, including outright restrictions on access to quality health care and barriers to opportunities and basic needs that affect health outcomes, such as education, employment, and housing, among others. Such policies are created and implemented by policymakers who garnered enough support from constituents to be elected to office, and yet sometimes seem to be working against many

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



constituents' best interest. This is likely due to a few factors, including some wealthy (and often White) voters benefiting from the harmful policies, some voters not understanding how their vote is linked to such policies and thereby subsequent livelihood outcomes, and [low voter turnout](#) among people who think their vote doesn't matter and people who have been historically let down by the political system. In order to combat threats to health equity, it is crucial that people understand the [importance of political engagement](#) so that their voice is heard and represented by the people in power serving them and the policies created. To start, community-based organizations and advocacy groups should engage with members of the community, especially [young people](#), to educate them on voting, upcoming elections, and policies affecting them and to register them to vote. Conducting deliberate [outreach to communities](#) and connecting with them on the health issues that matter to them will help motivate political participation. Not only should political engagement involve interactions with communities, but it must also involve [speaking directly with policymakers](#) about the effects of the policies they implement. Members of the community and influential people from various sectors can write, call, or meet with policymakers to present a case for ways to improve health outcomes through policies. While facts and data on the negative effects of certain policies on health can be persuasive, supplementing facts and data with [stories of lived experience](#) offers a humanistic approach that will be more impactful. Even in a time of increased political division on several key issues, we cannot shy away from having tough [conversations](#) with policymakers as they represent all people in their districts and must care about making life better for everyone. Effective political engagement to change the policies that perpetuate health inequity requires organizing and building alliances [across sectors](#) in order to have wider reach and impact, mobilizing communities to reclaim power and to demand accountability from policymakers and the rights and assurances they deserve.

*"It's very important that we think about how to fight the fight because we're going to fight the fight. Nowhere in history have we ever rolled over and died."*

- Dr. Chris Purnell

## Deeper Dive

### NAACP Election 2024 Toolkit

The [NAACP](#) published a [toolkit](#) ahead of the 2024 election to help reach Black communities and encourage them to vote. The toolkit outlines the top five issues impacting Black communities and motivating them to vote, as reported in the NAACP's research, including factors such as the

# Overcoming Threats to Health Equity: Today and Tomorrow Webinar Summary and Call to Action



economy, , crime and security, racism and discrimination, and protecting rights and freedoms. It provides guidance to educate communities on voting and elections and to mobilize voter registration, including phone and text message scripts to ask people about their voting plans and talking points for undecided people to consider. Cross-sector collaborations aimed at confronting threats to health equity can utilize the information and strategies from this toolkit to increase political engagement in future election cycles and in daily conversations about the health policies disproportionately harm marginalized communities.

## State Reported Efforts to Address Health Disparities: A 50 State Review

The [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) published an [analysis](#) of current state efforts to address health disparities and advance health equity. The authors conducted a review of publicly available documents and materials from all states and the District of Columbia and conducted case study interviews with fourteen stakeholders in California, North Dakota, and Michigan. Key takeaways from the analysis include that many states include health equity as a strategic priority, have an established infrastructure for this work, and include community engagement, data collection and analysis, and cross-sector partnerships in their approach. People and organizations from various sectors can explore the specific initiatives of states across the country to identify strategies and approaches to replicate within their communities to combat threats to health equity.

## About P4HE

The P4HE Collaborative harmonizes goals, advances learning, and facilitates collaboration to improve health equity. It is led by the Tulane University Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and is part of the Tulane Institute for Innovations in Health Equity. Support for this program is provided by ICF. Funding is provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



### Foster

the co-creation and spread of knowledge.



### Sharpen

our research tools to focus on solutions, facts and stories.



### Disrupt

traditional research approaches.



### Harmonize

our voices.



### Challenge

the status quo.



### Shine

light on practices that are indefensible, irrational and inconsistent.

To learn more about these issues, or Partners for Health Equity's calls to action, a resource library including a full recording of this, and all previous P4HE Webinars, can be found on the P4HE [website](#).