

Advancing Healthcare Reform: The American Heart Association's 2020 Statement of Principles for Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Health Care

The American Heart Association (AHA) has a long history of leading efforts to improve access to quality health care. We have consistently prioritized the needs and perspective of the patient in taking positions on health care reform, while recognizing the importance of biomedical research, providers, and health care delivery systems in advancing the care of patients and the prevention of disease. In order to fulfill our mission “to be a relentless force for a world of longer healthier lives,” we recognize continuous improvement is needed in the delivery of health care, with the acknowledgement that the health system overall must remain sustainable and effective at delivering optimal patient care.

- The AHA previously published principles for improving health care in 1993, and again in 2008, issuing recommendations that allowed us to evaluate and support subsequent proposals and legislation, including the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
- Since the passage of the ACA, millions of previously uninsured Americans have gained access to comprehensive health coverage through the expansion of Medicaid, the establishment of the Health Insurance Marketplace, and the creation of a number of consumer protections designed to mitigate discrimination from providers and health care systems and limit insurers' ability to deny, limit, or cancel coverage.
- Despite significant access gains over the past decade, millions of Americans remain uninsured or underinsured, and progress in reducing cardiovascular death and disability has stalled, with striking disparities persisting across sex, gender identity, race, and ethnicity.
- Affordability of health insurance coverage and of our health care system also remains a significant concern. AHA's vision for reform is placed in the context of the evolving health care landscape following the passage of the ACA, and a deepening recognition that efforts to prevent cardiovascular disease can have synergistic benefit in preventing other diseases and improving overall well-being while addressing costs.



Principles for Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Health Care

The AHA has prepared this updated statement of our principles for health care that is adequate, accessible, and affordable for everyone living in the United States. Building upon the core tenets of our prior statements, these updated principles focus on:

- expanding access to affordable health care and coverage;
- enhancing the availability of evidence-based preventive services;
- eliminating disparities that limit the availability and equitable delivery of health care;
- strengthening the public health infrastructure to respond to social determinants of health;
- prioritizing and accelerating investments in biomedical research;
- and growing a diverse, culturally competent health and health care workforce prepared to meet the challenges of delivering high-value health care.

Principle 1: All people living in the United States, *regardless of health condition*, should have comprehensive, understandable, and affordable health care coverage.

Principle 2: All people living in the United States should receive quality, affordable patient-centered health care.

Principle 3: All people living in the United States should have guaranteed access to preventive services without or with minimal cost-sharing, regardless of how they gain coverage.

Principle 4: Race, gender, and geographic disparities in health and health care must be eliminated.

Principle 5: Public health infrastructure should be strengthened to effectively engage diverse stakeholders in multiple sectors, adequately respond to social determinants of health, and support the elimination of systemic inequities in health and health care.

Principle 6: The United States' health care workforce should continue to grow and diversify through a sustained national commitment to culturally competent public health and medical education and clinical training.

Principle 7: Support of biomedical and health services research should be a national priority, and inflation-adjusted funding for the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other agencies must be maintained and expanded.