



Takeaways from the Health Equity Trends Summit June 2023

On June 13, 2023, the [Health Equity Compact](#) hosted the first [Health Equity Trends Summit](#) at UMass Boston. Over 700 people and [36 speakers and panelists](#) from health systems, the business sector, and state government explored ways to bring *breakthrough change to advance health equity in Massachusetts*.

We framed the urgency of this moment:

- The problem is urgent and growing; **the moral and economic imperatives are coalescing**: We released a new [cost report](#) showing that the economic burden due to health inequities experienced by Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations in MA totals \$5.9 billion/year, **and will increase to \$11.2 billion/year by 2050**, due to *avoidable healthcare spending, lost labor productivity, and premature death*.
- There are daunting structural barriers; but many actors have been laying the groundwork for large-scale change, and the state's unified response to COVID-19 serves as a model and testament to the power of collective action.
- This is a unique moment in history where **a window is open to make transformative change**, with stars aligned in the Commonwealth, federal partners with a shared vision, and a statewide [public opinion poll](#) that shows strong support for action to advance health equity.
- ***The Health Equity Compact can help to bring it all together and drive forward a shared agenda.***

We highlighted 6 critical strategies to further this work. Together, we must:

1. **Embrace shared responsibility** to dismantle the structural racism and barriers to health equity that are embedded in all of our institutions and systems.
2. **Collaborate and align efforts *within* and *across* sectors**: Create shared goals and measures, rooted in health outcomes, and accountability structures, so everyone understands what we're working towards and their role.
3. **Embed an equity lens into all of our work** and integrate efforts, rather than pursuing myriad initiatives in siloes
4. **"Start at the top"** to set goals and drive accountability across the system, and also--
5. **Center and partner with communities**, particularly communities of color, to develop solutions and generate momentum for change.
6. **Embrace the critical role of data** to better understand barriers, design interventions, align efforts, and promote accountability; but do not let imperfect data serve as an excuse for inaction.

We coalesced around specific opportunities for collective action:

- **Mobilize to pass the legislation [An Act to Advance Health Equity](#)**, a critical step towards breakthrough health equity reform across sectors, with provisions that enjoy [broad public support](#) to prioritize health equity in state government, standardize and report on health equity data, and improve access to and quality of care.
- **Standardize and use health equity data across the system**, acknowledging that this will take time to implement and requires rebuilding trust with communities and patients that we are asking to share this data.
- **Articulate and press the business case for health equity** to complement and buttress the moral case; demonstrate how everyone will benefit if we invest in keeping people healthy (for example, by increasing access to preventive and early stage care and addressing social determinants of health):
 - **Businesses** are hit by all the cost drivers outlined in the [cost report](#), paying more for employee insurance due to avoidable healthcare spending and losing valuable talent and labor productivity, across industries.
 - **Healthcare delivery organizations** bear this burden both as businesses and as providers under pressure to rein in healthcare costs in Massachusetts.
 - **Private and public insurers** share the burden of \$1.5 billion in avoidable healthcare spending. To improve health outcomes and reduce expensive, downstream interventions, *reimburse critical services* (such as doulas, interpreters, CHWs, and peer recovery coaches) and *increase MassHealth reimbursement rates*.
 - ***Massachusetts will only thrive, grow, and remain competitive when all residents are in better health!***