# Protect Our Care: Reduced disparities in health care

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WISCONSIN — Eleven years ago, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) became the law of the land and millions of people gained coverage and critical protections as a result. The ACA helped [reduce] longstanding racial disparities in coverage rates, improving health care access for communities of color across the board. In addition to increasing coverage and improving financial security, the law has helped narrow racial disparities in maternal health, cancer care, and more.

After four long years of Republican efforts to repeal and sabotage the law, President Biden and Democrats in Congress are now working to build on the strong foundation of the ACA to expand coverage, lower costs, and reduce racial disparities in health care. On March 11, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan into law, historic legislation that includes the most significant health care expansion in a decade. The health care measures in the American Rescue Plan will have profound impacts in racial disparities in health care access and outcomes, particularly as COVID-19 has hit communities of color [much harder] than others. Further expansion of the health care law will protect individuals who get sick and help communities slow the spread of the virus by helping detecting cases sooner and getting more people vaccinated. Protect Our Care recently released a [report] detailing how the American Rescue Plan works to reduce racial disparities in health care.

Thanks To The ACA:

**The ACA Helped Lower The Uninsured Rate For African Americans By More Than One Third.** According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the ACA helped lower the uninsured rate for nonelderly African Americans by more than one third between 2013 and 2016 from 18.9 percent to 11.7 percent. A recent study by the Urban Institute found that Medicaid expansion was associated with improving access to care and cutting uninsurance in half among young adults, with particularly dramatic coverage gains for young Black adults.

**Latinos Saw Higher Coverage Gains Than Any Other Racial Or Ethnic Group.** The percentage of people gaining health insurance under the ACA was higher for Latinos than for any other racial or ethnic group in the country. According to a study from Families USA, 5.4 million Latinos would lose coverage if the health care law were overturned.

**The ACA Cut The Uninsurance Rate For Asian Americans By More Than Half.** A recent study by the Commonwealth Fund found that the ACA cut uninsurance rates among Asian Americans by more than half, from nearly 20 percent in 2010 to just 7.9 percent in 2018.

**The ACA's Medicaid Expansion Reduced Racial Disparities In Health Care:**

Medicaid Expansion has been key to improving racial equity in health insurance coverage and access to care. Expansion has also been tied to improvements in disease-specific diagnosis and treatment.

- **Reduced Racial Disparities In Health Insurance Coverage And Access To Care.** The ACA led to historic reductions in racial disparities in access to health care, but racial gaps in insurance coverage narrowed the most in states that adopted Medicaid expansion. Per the Commonwealth Fund: "Coverage disparities in expansion states narrowed the most over the period…The

black–white coverage gap in those states dropped from 8.4 percentage points to 3.7 points, while the difference between Hispanic and white uninsured rates fell from 23.2 points to 12.7 points." Additionally, the ACA significantly reduced racial disparities in the share of people who went without care because of cost.

- **Reduced Disparities In Infant And Maternal Health.** Multiple studies draw the connection between Medicaid expansion and reduced infant and maternal mortality rates. One [study](#) found that reductions in maternal mortality in expansion states were concentrated among Black mothers, "suggesting that expansion could be contributing to decreasing racial disparities in maternal mortality." Expansion has also been tied to [improving](#) health outcomes for black babies, significantly reducing racial disparities in low birth weight and premature birth.
- **Improvements In Disease-Specific Diagnosis And Treatment.** Medicaid expansion [reduced](#) racial disparities in cancer care and resulted in earlier diagnosis and treatment for Black patients. Medicaid expansion also improved access to care for patients of color with kidney disease. According to the Center for American Progress, Black women were [more likely](#) to receive care because of the ACA.