

Protect Our Care Wisconsin: ACA At 12, expanded access to lifesaving preventative care

Posted on Tuesday, Mar 22, 2022

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Ahead of the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) 12th anniversary, Protect Our Care is highlighting the major achievements of the law each day leading up to March 23. The anniversary comes as enrollment is at an all-time high of 14.5 million Americans and premium costs are at a record low. President Biden and Democrats in Congress are continuing their work to strengthen the ACA by fighting to lower drug prices, reduce premiums, and expand coverage to even more families.

Protect Our Care will host events this week celebrating the law's success, despite [years of attacks by Republican lawmakers](#). Twelve years later, the ACA is here to stay and stronger than ever.

[Day 4: The ACA Has Expanded Preventative Health Care](#)

Twelve years ago, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) became the law of the land and millions of Americans gained access to lifesaving preventative care as a result. Thanks to the ACA, health plans are required to cover preventive care services without cost-sharing. Access to preventative care has improved health outcomes, reduced economic inequity, and advanced racial equity in health care.

After years of Republican efforts to repeal and sabotage the law, President Biden and Democrats in Congress have made historic investments to secure the future of American health care. Thanks to their vision and determination, 2022 saw 5.8 million Americans newly insured by an ACA plan and an additional 83 million Americans receiving their coverage through Medicaid or CHIP. Americans can now sleep easier at night knowing the ACA is here to stay and President Biden is hard at work to ensure Americans have access to the health care they need.

A closer look at how the ACA improves access to preventative services and reduces racial inequity:

Free Preventive Care. Because of the ACA, health plans must cover preventive services — like flu shots, cancer screenings, contraception, and mammograms – at no cost to consumers. This includes the [158 million](#) Americans with employer coverage. Importantly, the ACA requires plans to cover all vaccinations recommended by the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), [including](#) vaccines for COVID-19.

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Comprehensive Coverage. Preventative care is essential to comprehensive coverage and because of the ACA, insurers have to cover what are known as “[essential health benefits](#),” such as maternity care, prescription drugs, and substance and mental health. As it stands, ACA-compliant plans must cover [COVID-19](#) testing, treatment, and hospitalization.

Increased Access To Preventative Care Results In Better Health Outcomes. Medicaid expansion has helped millions of patients access preventative care. Preventative care has allowed for [earlier diagnosis](#) of colorectal cancer and [reducing](#) diabetes-related amputations.

Preventative Care Leads To Improved Primary Care And Family Planning.

Two studies from Michigan showed that Medicaid expansion [doubled](#) low-income patients' access to primary care, and that enrollees experienced [improved](#) access to birth control and family planning.

Preventive Care Has Reduced Racial Disparities In Health Outcomes.

Access to preventative care starts with access to affordable coverage. 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. The ACA significantly reduced racial disparities in the share of people who went without care because of cost.

Improvements To Infant And Maternal Health. Whether coverage comes from Medicaid expansion or increased access to affordable coverage on the ACA Marketplace, coverage improves infant and maternal mortality outcomes. 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.

Preventative Care Leads To Improvements In Disease-Specific Diagnosis And Treatment. A [2017](#) study called preventative care "one of the most important health care strategies to facilitate early diagnosis and treatment, improve quality of life, and prevent premature death." Access to preventative care through Medicaid expansion [reduced](#) racial disparities in cancer care and resulted in earlier diagnosis and treatment for Black patients. According to the Center for American Progress, Black women were [more likely](#) to receive care because of the ACA.

[PREVIOUS FACT SHEETS](#)

[Day 1: Patient Protections Of The Affordable Care Act](#)

[Day 2: The ACA Has Lowered The Cost Of Quality Health Care](#)

[Day 3: The ACA Has Expanded Access To Affordable Care](#)