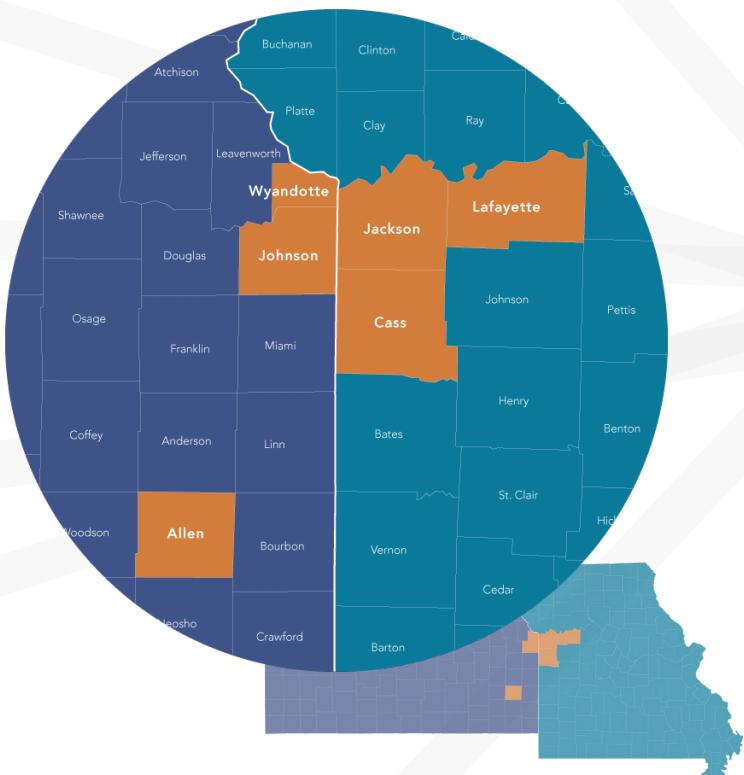


2026 MISSOURI

POLICY AGENDA

ABOUT REACH

The REACH Healthcare Foundation is a charitable foundation dedicated to improving health coverage and access to quality, affordable healthcare for uninsured and medically underserved people. The foundation focuses its support in a six-county service area that encompasses Allen, Johnson, and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and Cass, Jackson and Lafayette counties in Missouri, as well as the City of Kansas City, Missouri.



LEARN MORE



© (913) 432-4196

reachhealth.org

info@reachhealth.org

REACH
healthcare foundation®



REACH BY THE NUMBERS





STRENGTHEN THE SAFETY NET

Protecting and expanding healthcare services and providers who treat Medicaid beneficiaries and the underserved is critical considering recent federal funding cuts to the health and human services safety net. This requires an effective and adequately funded public health and community-based healthcare system, particularly for people with fewer financial resources or who face access challenges due to geography, federal funding cuts and work requirements, or other social determinants of health.

Legislation passed in 2024 to prevent drug manufacturers from limiting where they will deliver drugs purchased under the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program provides important protections for healthcare providers serving people in rural and high-poverty areas. Certain hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's), Ryan White HIV/AIDS Programs (RWHAP's) and other health and human service providers participate in the 340B program. This legislation should be upheld to enable patients to access life-saving prescriptions closer to home.

Missouri is behind in state payments to local healthcare systems, clinics and providers for services already provided. Some providers are owed several million dollars in delayed reimbursements for services rendered to MO HealthNet-covered patients, placing the state's healthcare infrastructure at financial risk. Adequate state funding is under threat, too, as drastic and damaging tax cuts are being proposed that would jeopardize funding and disrupt or even eliminate these critical healthcare services that Missourians need, especially those living in rural areas.

Local public health agencies, community health centers, and community-based behavioral and mental health organizations provide important services like prevention, primary and specialty healthcare. They are the first point of entry to the healthcare system for many Missourians, and the first line of defense for communities experiencing a public health emergency. Funding of Local Public Health Agencies (LPHA's), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) and Certified Community Based Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC's) should be protected and increased to substantially improve those systems' financial stability, ability to compete for providers, and capacity to deliver services. Additionally, the state should pass legislation that funds the 988-suicide prevention hotline to meet increased demand for that life-saving service.



BRIDGE THE COVERAGE DIVIDE

The REACH Healthcare Foundation promotes health coverage for all, regardless of insurance or socioeconomic status. We support policies that help Missourians obtain and best utilize their health coverage, including MO HealthNet, the state's Medicaid managed care program. REACH opposes new eligibility restrictions and requirements for existing public benefit programs, as well as any efforts to restrict voter rights or discourage voter participation. The foundation also supports sound fiscal policy that balances income, property, and sales taxes to provide efficient and effective public services.

Seek alternatives to damaging cuts proposed to essential health infrastructure, including hospitals, community health workers, and health navigators. The Governor's proposed budget for this year includes sweeping cuts to hospitals, community-based care services, nutrition, and mental and behavioral health. Local primary and safety net health care providers are already strained from federal cuts last year. This would put more hospitals at risk of closure, especially in rural areas, and mean some providers will reduce or eliminate services. We encourage policymakers to find ways to avoid making these especially harmful cuts.

MO HealthNet is an important source of health insurance coverage and care for nearly 1.3 million Missourians. Following the passage of Missouri Amendment 2 in 2020 and the Affordable Care Act in 2012, Missouri's uninsured rate dropped from 13% to 7.5%. Yet the state's consistent record of delays in processing MO HealthNet applications and eligibility determinations persists. Inefficiencies and chronic understaffing at the state level result in delayed medical care and prescription access for many Missourians already facing financial hardship, including life-saving insulin and prenatal care.

Further eligibility restrictions and requirements to public benefit programs may sound good in theory but are counterproductive.

State-administered programs like the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and MO HealthNet (Medicaid) support Missourians at different points in their lives—whether they are raising children, navigating job changes, caring for loved ones, or managing health needs. Restrictions passed under HR 1 are unlikely to improve outcomes and instead create barriers to care, weaken public health, and increase administrative costs for the state. The Missouri General Assembly should avoid further cuts and protect these programs to keep residents healthy and the economy strong.

Voter engagement is an important contributor to individual and community health. Voting access and fair representation are fundamental tenets of a healthy democracy and should be accessible to all Missourians as they directly impact health outcomes. REACH supports measures that make it easier to be civically engaged, and we oppose measures that intentionally reduce representation of people and communities seeking to improve their health and quality of life.



CLOSE THE HEALTH EQUITY GAP

The REACH Healthcare Foundation believes that accessible, affordable healthcare is a human right for everyone, and that healthy people make for a healthier workforce, economy and state. REACH supports public policies that protect access to comprehensive health services for all Missourians and that recognize the cultural, geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity that makes Missouri a vibrant place to live. We support policies that foster welcoming and belonging for current residents and newcomers, and that prioritize community-informed investment of Rural Health Transformation dollars across the state. We oppose policies intended to limit access to reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare and services, and those designed to undermine efforts to attract a more diverse and inclusive citizenry, business community, and workforce.

Implementation and allocation of Rural Health Transformation (RHT) funding should be closely monitored to ensure those dollars meet the greatest needs of rural Missourians to improve quality and access to health care. Rural Missourians face challenges in getting the health care they need, often due to a lack of services near their homes. Through the federal RHT grant awards to states, Missouri is set to receive over \$216 million in 2026. There should be intentional engagement with stakeholders in each Regional Network and Hub by policymakers to ensure community needs are being met, and that funds are distributed meaningfully and equitably.

Decisions about health care, including resource allocation at the system level, and medical decisions at the individual level, need to be informed and guided by existing science and evidence. Disaggregating public health data by characteristics like race, ethnicity, and geography is a best practice to guide interventions that improve health outcomes among underserved groups, as well as stewarding investments for best impact. We encourage policymakers to review the [2024 Missouri State Health Assessment](#) to learn more about this subject area. We also support immunization and vaccine recommendations that are grounded in credible, evidence-based science, consistent with guidance from the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Whether by choice or necessity, it is crucial that any individual faced with critical decisions about their health and well-being has access to the care they need without interference or delay. Abortion rights, reproductive health, and gender-affirming care are no exceptions. Missourians overwhelmingly support the ability of people to make personal health decisions without fear of reprisal and government intrusion.

Our region is stronger and more economically vibrant when it creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for all people.

With Missouri set to be on the global stage for the 2026 World Cup, we want to ensure a safe and welcoming environment is at the center of our decision-making. Regardless of background or place of birth, creating communities where people feel welcomed supports economic resilience and shared prosperity. Immigrants make up about 5% of Missouri's population and nearly 6% of the state's workforce, contributing to local economies, creating good-paying jobs with benefits, such as employer-sponsored health insurance, and enriching Missouri's cultural and economic fabric. We oppose policies that limit opportunities, target people based on race or ethnicity, or which keep people from achieving their American dream here in Missouri.

CONTACT US

BRENDA SHARPE

President & CEO

REACH Healthcare Foundation
brenda@reachhealth.org



NATE MADDEN, PH.D.

Director of Health Policy

REACH Healthcare Foundation
nate@reachhealth.org



DAVID WINTON

Policy Advisor

Winton Policy Group
david@wintonpolicygroup.com

JESSICA PETRIE THELEMAQUE

Policy Advisor

Winton Policy Group
jessica@wintonpolicygroup.com